COMMUNICATION WITHIN AN ORGANIZATION:
AN ALTERNATIVE THEORY GROUNDED IN QUALITATIVE DATA

By
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ABSTRACT

The present research in organizational communication is based on two assumptions: 1) that individuals communicate interpersonally within an organization, and 2) that there are variables that influence how individuals communicate on this level. The theory developed as a result of the investigation of these two assumptions is grounded in qualitative data. This research follows the grounded theory approach as developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967). The unique nature of this research is preceded only by the research of Browning (1973) who first adopted the grounded theory approach to the development of organizational communication theory.

The grounded theory, presented as the result of this research, is developed from a systems perspective. General Systems Theory (Bertalannfy, 1956) and the open system approach (Katz and Kahn, 1966) are discussed as a means to understanding organizations. The Interact System Model (Hawes and Fisher, 1971) provides further rationale for the employment of the systems perspective in investigating organizational communication. The
grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) is introduced as an alternative method for the discovery of theory and is presented as the approach employed for the present research.

The data used for the development of the grounded theory are qualitative. The researcher employed the techniques of participant observation (McCall and Simmons, 1969) and in-depth interviewing (Browning, 1973) for the collection of data at the research site. A small suburban retail jewelry store located in the Eastern United States with 16 full and part-time employees served as the field research site.

The analysis of the qualitative data follows the constant comparison method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). The results of the analysis are 22 categories of communication and non-communication variables. The relationships among these variables are discussed and diagrammatically depicted. The results, 38 hypotheses, are presented as the grounded theory.

The discussion of the grounded theory includes a comparison of the theory with that of Browning (1973),
limitations of the research and implications for future research. A discussion of the grounded theory and its role in the field of organizational communication theory development concludes this report.
CHAPTER ONE

THE RESEARCH GOALS

Introduction

The purpose of this research is to analyze the role of communication within a retail sales organization. Chapter One will develop the rationale for the research project through a review of organization theory and organizational communication research. A discussion of general systems theory and the Interact System Model (Hawes and Fisher, 1971) will follow as theoretical support for the goals of the research project. Finally, an alternative method for studying organizational communication—the grounded theory approach—will be presented, followed by a statement of the research goals.

Chapter One will provide the foundation upon which the research methods, discussed in Chapter Two, were employed. Chapter Three will present the results of this research, a grounded theory of organizational
communication, derived from the constant comparison analysis of qualitative data, collected through the observation and interviewing of organization members at the field research site. This grounded theory will be presented in Chapter Four as a means through which one can explain communication in the organization.

Organization Theory

Undoubtedly, there have been many approaches to the study of organizations. Scott (1961, 1974) provides a review of these approaches followed by suggestions for future organization theory development. Initially, Scott (1961) divided organization theory into three stages of development: 1) classical, 2) neoclassical, and 3) modern.

For Scott (1961), classical organization theory focused on the formal anatomy of the organization. The limitation of the classical doctrine, according to Scott (1961), is that it neglects four important areas of organizational study: 1) the study of individual personality, 2) informal groups, 3) intraorganizational conflict, and 4) decision-making processes. The
foundations of neoclassical theory are much the same as those found in classical theory with the addition of the affect of human actions on the organization (Scott, 1961). Barnard (1938) characterized this approach by pointing out three elements of an organization from the neoclassical phase: 1) communication, 2) willingness to serve, and 3) common purpose. Modern organization theory deals with four areas untouched by classical and neoclassical theory: 1) the strategic parts of the system, 2) the nature of their mutual dependency, 3) the main processes in the system that link the parts and their adjustment to each other, and 4) the goals sought by the system (Scott, 1961).

In his reassessment of organization theory, Scott (1974) modified his arrangement of classical, neoclassical and modern stages into a less divisive discussion. Scott (1974) contends that his previously labeled classical and modern theoretical approaches to organizations have basic similarities. Both classical and modern (systems) theory share the characteristics of rationality and efficiency. In other words, both approaches follow a conservative path in their development of organization theory as a means to analyze the relative inputs and outputs of the organization
and, hence, to control efficiency. For Scott (1974), this concept has been the focus of managers in organizations and, therefore, has drawn the attention of organization theorists. Since theorists using these approaches investigate organizations with the intent of improving efficiency couched in the minimization of interaction—classical approach, or the maximization of interaction—systems approach, Scott (1974) maintains that these approaches are "conservative" (1974, p. 244).

The values of conservative theory correspond to American utilitarian beliefs that hold material growth to be efficacious, material abundance to be limitless, and consensus to be the natural manner of human relationships. Both the classical and systems models assume these beliefs because they are the ultimate a priori values of conservative organization theory. These values supply the criteria for acceptable social, economic and technological policies. They influence the curricula to be studied in courses of learning in management. They determine the content of communication between managers of organizations and the people served by them; and they control the expectations that people have of the managers of organizations (Scott, 1974, pp. 244-246).

For Scott (1974), the limitations of these conservative models lie in the lack of understanding of the implications for management, should these values—growth, abundance and stability—diminish in our world view.
Scott (1974) proposes the radical model as an alternative for exploring possibilities for management processes. "The values of the radical model are stability or decay, scarcity, and conflict" (Scott, 1974, p. 250). From this perspective, argues Scott (1974), management must adopt a pessimistic view of the future as the values from the conservative models will be questioned since "changing circumstances in America relating to resources, environment, expectations, and confidences may cause significant value shifts" (1974, p. 252). Only through this approach, a re-thinking of the values which shape management and theory development processes, can theorists develop new models of organization theory.

Organization theory, then, must transcend the traditional values of the conservative models and seek out alternative approaches for studying organizations. One alternative approach is the study of organizational communication from a systems perspective. Katz and Kahn (1966) recognize this alternative:

Communication, the exchange of information and the transmission of meaning, is the very essence of a social system or an organization... (the accomplishment of work) depends upon communication between people in each
organizational subsystem and upon communication between subsystems (1966, pp. 223-224).

Organizational Communication

Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo (1982) contend that the constraints of organization theory, however, have affected research in organizational communication. According to these authors, organization theory and hence, organizational communication research have traditionally had a managerial orientation, where notions of efficiency have dominated the research analyses (Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1982). Communication researchers, then, have followed organizational theorists in the search for understanding how organizations work for the benefit of managers who will, in turn, be able to make the organization work better (Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1982).

Putnam (1982) describes this orientation of efficiency in organization theory and organizational communication as functionalist. For Putnam (1982) this functionalist perspective results in a mechanistic view of communication where the form, rather than the content
of communication is the basis of analysis. Communication and organizations have been treated as physical entities by researchers who have focused their analyses on an objective view of the flow of messages, for example, as in organizational communication research with emphasis on transmission effects, selection of channels and information processing (Putnam, 1982). By concentrating on efficiency, the functionalist perspective (Putnam, 1982) and the managerial perspective (Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1982) have ignored potential areas of investigating communication in organizations. Pacanowsky and O'Donnell (1982) recognize this limitation:

...more things are going on in organizations than getting the job done. People do get the job done, true...but people in organizations also gossip, joke, knife one another, initiate romantic involvements, cue new employees to ways of doing the least amount of work that still avoids hassles from a supervisor, talk sports, arrange picnics. We believe that an intriguing thing about communication is the way in which it creates and constitutes the taken-for-granted reality of the real world. Social activity, as we see it, is primarily the communicative accomplishment of interrelated actions. (1982, pp. 116, 121).

One way to characterize this research oversight is the observation that organizational communication
theory lacks a focus on and the investigation of interpersonal communication across time within the context of the organization. In other words, re-directing the focus of analysis from organizational efficiency to organizational communication via interpersonal communication—the emergent relationships among organization members developed through communication—will provide new and richer insights into the understanding of organizations.

The communicologist can overcome the constraints of the managerial (Pacanowsky and O'Donnell-Trujillo, 1982) and functionalist (Putnam, 1982) perspective, and move beyond the limitations of conservative (Scott, 1974) values by focusing on the analysis of interpersonal communication in the organization. This analysis is the goal of this research project; however, before this analysis can begin, the researcher must establish a framework for the investigation. That is, the researcher must develop a perspective for the study of organizational communication which facilitates the analysis. Systems theory, specifically the open system perspective, provides for the communicologist just such a perspective for the study and understanding of organizations.
Systems Theory

General systems theory is a product of the biological and natural sciences and gained the attention of social scientists through the work of von Bertalanffy (1956). Bertalanffy explored the notion of equifinality—the attainment of the same final condition from different starting points—in the biological sciences as a means of understanding the process of development. This perspective led to the development of the open system approach which was later adapted to the study of organizations (Katz and Kahn, 1966).

Katz and Kahn (1966) argue that social scientists, in their efforts to understand organizations, have traditionally relied upon two assumptions: 1) that the organization's name defined its nature and location, and 2) that the goals of the organization were the goals of the founders or leaders of the organization. Since classic organization theorists used organizational objectives determined by the founders of the organization in place of a theoretical set of constructs for scientific analysis, they were neglecting facets of the organization
in their analyses (Katz and Kahn, 1966). For Katz and Kahn (1966) the systems approach forces the analyst to use theoretical concepts which "begin with the input, output and functioning of the organization as a system and not with the rational purposes of its leaders," since an organization "characteristically includes more or less than is indicated by the design of its founder or the purpose of its leader" (1966, pp. 15-16).

The organization as a system is defined as a collection of "the patterned activities of a number of individuals" (Katz and Kahn, 1966, p. 16). These patterned activities are repeated and, with respect to a common output, are interdependent or complementary; a single or unpredictable occurrence of the activity does not constitute an organization (Katz and Kahn, 1966). The system, or organization, interacts with its environment as a means of transforming its output, or product, into additional resources, or input, and therefore is characterized as an open system (Katz and Kahn, 1966). For these authors, the open system approach is concerned with the organization's repeated cycles of input, transformation, output, and renewed input, which is derived from interaction with the external environment.
Katz and Kahn (1966) identify nine characteristics of open systems:

1. **Importation of energy.** Organizations rely on the environment for energy resources, material resources, and more specifically, for resources such as personnel, funds and technology.

2. **The through-put.** The organization transforms the available energy through the work of its members; for example, in creating or building a product such as an automobile.

3. **The output.** The product must be exported into the environment; the automobile is offered for sale.

4. **Systems as cycles of events.** Organizations repeat the production process over the course of time; the automobile is mass produced on the production line.

5. **Negative entropy.** Entropy is the process in which all systems move toward disorganization, or death; however, organizations can import more energy from the environment than they expend,
can store the excess energy and hence achieve negative entropy. The automobile is sold for a profit, the company uses the excess over cost of production as additional resources.

6. **Information input, negative feedback and the coding process.** Organizations develop means through which they can interpret their functioning in relation to the environment, and correct any deviations which occur. For example, when the American public began purchasing smaller, foreign-made automobiles for fuel efficiency and significantly reduced their purchase of the larger American cars, the American automobile industry felt a great reduction in profits and sales. As a result, American automobile makers re-designed their models and began producing smaller and more marketable cars.

7. **The steady state and dynamic homeostasis.** Organizations adapt to the changing environment, but maintain their basic character. The decline in sales of large American automobiles resulted in production worker lay-offs while
the industry adapted to the changing automobile market. Although the production force was reduced and financial difficulties were predominant, the American automobile industry preserved its life and through the work of their research and development forces, were soon able to re-hire some production workers. The output changed in form—cars were smaller; but the nature of the system—production line remained the same.

8. Differentiation. Organizations move in the direction of elaboration and differentiation through the multiplication of roles with increased specialization of function and division of labor. The automobile production line consists of a large number of workers, each with very specific, separate and different functions.

9. Equifinality. Organizations can reach the same desired end from different initial conditions and a variety of paths. Automobile manufacturers all strive to make a profit.
through the production and sale of cars; however, each maker begins with distinct model designs and completes the production process in a unique manner, as well as developing specific marketing strategies.

These characteristics are important for the identification of any open system. The necessity of studying the organization as an open system is best argued by Katz and Kahn (1966):

...traditional organizational theories have tended to view the human organization as a closed system. The tendency has led to a disregard of differing organizational environments and the nature of organizational dependency on environment. It has led also to an overconcentration on principles of internal organizational functioning with consequent failure to develop and understand the processes of feedback which are essential to survival (1966, p. 29).

The rationale for developing theories of organizational communication from this open systems perspective is drawn from Weick (1969):

Rather than searching for unique behaviors that occur within an organization and then building a theory about this uniqueness, it seems more useful to build theories about the particular ways that enduring
individual dispositions are expressed
in an organizational setting, and about
the effects of this expression (1969, p. 26).

The expressions of organization members, then, is a
crucial factor in the organizational process and, in
order to understand organizations, the analyst must
consider the communicative behavior of the system
personnel (Weick, 1969). According to Hawes (1973),
communication is "patterned space-time behavior with
a symbolic referent" (1973, p. 13).

Weick (1969) proposes a method for the investi-
gation of organizational communication through the study
of the interaction of organization members. Since the
parts of an open system are interdependent (Katz and
Kahn, 1966), Weick (1969) argues that interacts—
observable behaviors among individuals—rather than acts—
observable behavior of a single individual—must be
studied for the development of organizational theories.
Hawes and Fisher (1971) follow Weick's (1969) suggestion
with the development of the Interact System Model as
a specific approach for researching communication in
social collectivities—groups or organizations.
Interact System Model

For Hawes (1973), "communication is a series of concatenous acts where the communication interact is the fundamental unit of analysis" (1973, p. 13). This definition closely follows the systems perspective of interdependence argued by Katz and Kahn (1966) and Weick (1969). Weick (1969) stressed the need for the study of observable communication behavior and Hawes and Fisher (1971) assume that premise in their Interact System Model (ISM).

In the development of the ISM, Hawes and Fisher (1971) begin with precepts from General Systems Theory. These authors reiterate the concept of a holistic treatment of the system (as does Hawes (1973)). The concept of concatenity dictates that the ongoing communication in the organization must be studied in its spatio-temporal context (Hawes, 1973). This stream of communication, then, can be analyzed in terms of patterns of communicative behavior which define the relationships among the elements of the system (Hawes and Fisher, 1971).

Hawes and Fisher (1971) identify the components of the ISM as codable units of verbal and nonverbal
behavior and that the relationships among these components are defined by recurring patterns of communication units. "The ISM is directly concerned with observable verbal and nonverbal behavior" (Hawes and Fisher, 1971, p. 448).

This concern follows that posited by Weick (1969) as the means of building organizational theory. Weick (1969) recognized the condition of relationships in the system. For Weick (1969) these relationships among system variables are mutually causal and are either direct or inverse. With a direct causal relationship changes will occur in the same direction—with an increase in one variable comes an increase in the other variable; with a decrease in one variable comes a decrease in the other variable. With an inverse causal relationship, changes occur in the opposite direction—with an increase in one variable comes a decrease in the other variable; with a decrease in one variable comes an increase in the other variable (Weick, 1969). Hawes (1973) identifies interacts as the inputs of the system: "The function of these interacts defines the state of the relationship" (1973, p. 19).

These relationships, introduced by Weick (1969), are a crucial element of the ISM of Hawes and Fisher (1971).
According to Hawes (1973), "the relationship...is the ultimate object of investigation" (1973, p. 18).

These theorists, Hawes and Fisher (1971), Hawes (1973), and Weick (1969), all indicate the necessity for investigating the process of communication in the organization. Their concepts can be traced to General Systems Theory (Bertalanffy, 1956) and the notion of equifinality—process as a determining factor of final condition. The theoretical concept of the communication process is the foundation of the present research. Through the grounded theory approach (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) to doing research, this foundation can be built upon to yield a theory of organizational communication.

**Grounded Theory**

A theory is a set of interrelated constructs (concepts), definitions and propositions that present a systematic view of phenomena by specifying relations among variables, with the purpose of explaining and predicting phenomena" (Kerlinger, 1973, p. 9).
A unique means of achieving this goal is the concept of a grounded theory. As a reaction to the traditional logical-deductive approach to theory construction, Glaser and Strauss (1967) define grounded theory as "the discovery of theory from data—systematically obtained and analyzed in social research" (1967, p. 1). As with all metatheoretical perspectives, grounded theory seeks to provide us with relevant predictions, explanations, interpretations and applications. The authors propose a strategy for furthering the discovery of grounded theory in a general method of comparative analysis. The elements of the theory generated by comparative analysis are: conceptual categories; their conceptual properties; and hypotheses or generalized relations among the categories and their properties (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

A theory developed in this manner should have at least four interrelated properties according to Glaser and Strauss (1967):

1. The theory must closely fit the substantive area in which it will be used.
2. It must be understandable to laymen concerned with this area.

3. It must be sufficiently general to be applicable to a multitude of diverse daily situations within the substantive area.

4. The theory should allow the user partial control over the structure and process of daily situations as they change through time.

The "fitness" of the theory ensures that crucial data will not be lost due to the need for forcing or distorting data so that it can be applied to the theory. A grounded theory that is induced from the data should be close to the everyday realities of the substantive area and, therefore, be highly applicable for analysts within the area.

The usefulness of a theory to laymen in the field is dependent upon its understandability. For laymen to heighten their awareness of problems and search for solutions to those problems, grounded substantive theory
can act as a point of departure; however, without an understanding of the theory, laymen will less readily attempt its application.

Generality also affects the usefulness of theory. The theory, with its generality, will be sufficiently flexible to be applied to diverse situations. In doing so, the user can modify the theory or make necessary changes, becoming another source for theory and reinforcing the concept of theory generation as a process.

Control relates to theory usefulness and generality. If the user has some control in applying the theory to daily situations, s/he will be more likely to use the theory. Additionally, the generality of the theory, its flexibility, will provide the user with the control needed to apply the theory in varying situations and revise her/his tactics of application if necessary.

In following these four properties: fitness, understandability, generality and controllability, the grounded theory will be applicable in situations as
well as to situations (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Thus, the user of the theory is able to apply its concepts or hypotheses within the context of a given situation, or outside the context of the situation. The theory, then, is developed with these properties, from the insights of a researcher. Generating theory from insights based on observation is perhaps the core of grounded theory. However, these insights need to be taken beyond the point of discussion only.

A too-frequent practice...is to accept the existing theory and simply elaborate on it, thus surpressing or ignoring much rich data as well as potentially rich insights that could 'transcend' the theory. The theorist's task is to make the most of his insights by developing them into systematic theory. The chief safeguard against stopping the development of one's theory too soon is...the systematic use of comparative analysis. This gives a broad, rich, integrated, dense and grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, pp. 255-256).

Grounded theory is theory grounded in data—qualitative data. Argyris (1979) defines qualitative data as those:

1) whose meanings are subjective, 2) whose logic is implicit, which are therefore 3) rarely quantifiable, and hence 4) difficult to use to create
trends or to make comparisons that are quantitative (1979, p. 672).

Argyris (1979) argues, however, that qualitative data, when organized by appropriate theory, may meet the requirements of refutability and causality and lead to hypotheses about the invariant relationships among variables. The use of qualitative data as opposed to quantitative data is a significant issue in the grounded theory approach. Glaser and Strauss (1967) contend that the qualitative method can more easily expose the crucial elements of social theory from data on physical conditions, consequences, norms, patterns and deviances. For these authors, more often than not, qualitative research is the end product of research within a substantive area, beyond which few social researchers are motivated to move. In addition, Glaser and Strauss (1967) argue that qualitative research is often the most adequate and efficient means to obtain the type of information needed, since this type of research makes accessible data in areas of social life that are otherwise undetected in collecting quantitative data.
Phillips (1971) reinforces the importance of theory grounded in data since it is poor strategy to attempt to collect data by committing oneself to a particular set of concepts and a theory and thus neglecting what may prove to be the most important phenomena in the situation (1971, p. 164).

Coming from another perspective, Brandt (1972) argues that, for data to have any real meaning, at least three factors that structure a given observation must be taken into account.

The process being observed is one factor that structures a given observation. In other words, the behavior that the researcher seeks to examine will determine which elements of activity are relevant to the investigation. A second factor is the context in which an observation is made. Because the conditions under which behavior occurs influences that behavior, the nature of those conditions must be included in the collection of observational data. The observer is yet another factor to be considered, as her/his presence may affect the nature or interpretation of the observation data.
Participant Observation

A data collection technique often used within the context of grounded theory is participant observation. McCall and Simmons (1969) characterize this process as the "blend of methods and techniques that is characteristically employed in studies of social situations or complex social organizations of all sorts" (1969, p. 3). This method uses the researcher as a participant, the researcher as an observer, and the integration of interviewing techniques. The blending of these methods will lead to the three levels of analytic descriptions of a complex social organization:

- employing the concepts, propositions and empirical generalizations of a body of scientific theory as the basic guides in analysis and reporting;
- employing thorough and systematic collection, classification and reporting of facts;
- and generating new empirical generalizations based on these data (McCall and Simmons, 1969, p. 3).

Phillips (1971) has concluded that observation is highly productive both in the development of theory which applies to the setting and in the construction of interview schedules (and other research tools) which seem to
be effective. Brandt (1972) argues that naturalistic observation in the field situation has made and can continue to make a "lasting impact on basic behavioral science itself, especially by serving to generate hypotheses" (1972, p. 2).

To the communicologist, the surrounding, context and environment play an important role in the observational phase, as do interactions between and among parties. To illustrate this contrast, Schein (1969) emphasizes the human process in order to obtain a more holistic view of organizations. He breaks down the process into six areas: communication, member roles and functions in groups, group problem-solving and decision making, group norms and group growth, leadership and authority, and intergroup cooperation and competition. Communication factors and how they relate to these six areas of the human process in an organization provide the researcher with a basic framework in the collection of data. These areas served as guideposts for the collection of data in the present research. Throughout the observation and interviewing of organization members, the researcher took into account
communication factors such as: who communicates, how often and for how long; who communicates with whom; who talks after whom; who interrupts whom; elements of communication style (i.e., assertiveness, humor, etc.); and kinesics or nonverbal communication.

Browning (1973) utilized this communicative perspective in the development of his grounded theory of organizational communication. Browning's (1973) data were collected at the Mid-Ohio Regional Planning Commission, a public land use and transportation planning agency. Importantly, Browning's (1973) research represents the sole grounded theory of organizational communication. Glaser and Strauss (1967) stress the need for continued generation of grounded theories as theory development is a building process—where each subsequent researcher uses preceding research as a starting point for the creation of richer theory.

Throughout the observation and interviewing of organization members, Browning (1973) made notes on communicative behavior. Afterward, these notes were elaborated into manuscripts. From the manuscripts,
Browning (1973) selected information to be coded into categories. During the coding process, categories were developed from the data. Browning (1973) discovered 24 categories and, in so doing, relationships among the categories became evident. Browning (1973) then diagrammatically depicted these relationships and identified them as direct or inverse following Weick's (1969) perspective of systemic relationships.

The present research, like Browning's (1973), is an investigation of communication in the organization. From the discussion of organization theory and organizational communication, the researcher identified the general goal of this research. The rationale for this research was developed from the discussion of systems theory and the grounded theory approach. At this time, the specific research goals can be stated.

**Research Goals**

There are two assumptions upon which this research is based: 1) that individuals communicate interpersonally within an organization and 2) that there are variables
that influence how the individuals communicate on this level. During the observation of an organization, the researcher made note of verbal and nonverbal communicative behavior within the organizational setting. These communication events were then categorized, and relationships among the categories were then drawn to yield an outline of communication interacts among the organization members.

The data provided the researcher with indications of the relationships among these categories. The relationships were labeled as positive or negative (inverse). These relationships were graphically depicted in the development of the grounded theory.

Summary

This chapter presented a review of organization theory and a perspective on organizational communication. The rationale for the present research was developed from that discussion with theoretical support from systems theory and the Interact System Model (Hawes and Fisher, 1971). The grounded theory approach (Glaser
and Strauss, 1967) was presented as an alternative method for theory development and was discussed in light of qualitative data and participant observation. Finally, the research goals were stated. Chapter Two of this report will discuss in detail the methods of this research.
CHAPTER TWO

METHODS

This chapter reviews the methods used in the collection and analysis of data for this study. The data were collected by integrating the methods of participant observation and the in-depth interview. The following discussion provides an overview of the participant observation and interview method, specifies the research method for this study and concludes with the approach to data analysis. The data were collected by two researchers. The primary researcher collected the observation data, a research assistant conducted the interviews. This division of duties was necessary because the collection of observation data required a greater time commitment than the collection of interview data, and since the research assistant had less time to devote to the project, the primary researcher assumed this responsibility.
Participant observation is a characteristic blend or combination of methods and techniques that is employed in studying certain types of subject matter: primitive societies, deviant subcultures, complex organizations (such as hospitals, unions, and corporations), social movements, communities, and informal groups (such as gangs and factory worker groups) (McCall and Simmons, 1969, p. 1).

This blend of techniques involves social interaction in the field situation with the members of the group being studied, some direct observation of events, some formal and informal interviewing, and open-endedness in the direction of the research (McCall and Simmons, 1969).

McCall and Simmons (1969) provide two major characteristics of participant observation: non-standardization and effective use of relationships established between the researcher and the subjects in the field for eliciting data. Both the advantages and limitations of unstructured observation and interviewing stem from these characteristics. According to McCall
and Simmons (1969), because of non-standardization, the data are not generally useful for traditional data analytic/statistical treatment. Also, a likelihood of bias, because of the development of relationships between the researcher and informants, is a concern. Due to the unstructured form of the study, the possibility exists that the researcher may guide the study in a particular direction as a result of misinterpreted impressions s/he has gained from the subjects.

However, the advantages of this method far exceed the limitations. For example, the analyst is not as likely to be bound by prejudgment: s/he can formulate the problem while the study is in process. With this close contact with the field situation, as the research progresses, the researcher is better able to avoid misleading or meaningless questions asked of the subjects. The researcher is able to build relationships with the subjects and, by gaining an organizational perspective, avoid the mishandling of delicate situations. Participant observation is well suited for constant comparative analysis, making the
categories more appropriate for analysis of the organization. The field worker can generally impute motives more validly by being able to contrast actual behavior with stated ideals of the individuals in the system. Also, s/he can select later informants in such a way as to gain additional insight on an emerging hypothesis (McCall and Simmons, 1969).

The field worker, it appears, may obtain material with depth more satisfactorily than, for example, the survey researcher. Some information collected in the field may seem irrelevant, but later, when the researcher's perspective has changed, this information could be extremely valuable. The participant observer has the advantage of making use of selected informants' skills and insights by letting these informants explain and describe the situation as they see it. It becomes easier for the field worker to move from the field to her/his desk and back again—from data collection to analysis. Difficult-to-quantify variables are probably less distorted by unstructured observation and interviewing than by a method used to operationalize them.
for quantification by, for example, a survey. Finally, the field worker has a definite advantage over the survey researcher in delicate situations where covert research is essential, where s/he can make observations without being singled out as a person who is collecting information (McCall and Simmons, 1969).

Since observation is the mode through which data were collected in this study, the reader should be aware of the different observation techniques, or observer roles, available to the researcher. Gold (1958) sees every field work role as a "social interaction device for securing information for scientific purposes and a set of behaviors in which an observer's self is involved" (1958, p. 218). Gold (1958) makes the assumption that in order for the researcher to be successful in her/his role as a field worker, s/he must be successful in taking the role of an informant. Gold (1958) separates these techniques into four categories: the complete participant, the participant as observer, the observer as participant, and the complete observer.
In the role as a complete participant, the researcher conceals her/his role and enters the life of those observed as thoroughly as is possible. An example of this situation is the worker who functions as the eyes and ears of management without the knowledge of her/his co-workers. In much the same fashion, the complete observer conceals her/his purpose from those being studied. The case of a customer, in a sales situation, that is actually an observer is an example where the subjects do not know about the observation, much less about the purpose of the observation. The participant as observer can be illustrated by a situation where the researcher actually participates in the functions of the group, and at the same time observes their behavior with their knowledge of the study. Employee evaluations are often conducted through this method, where the subjects are aware of the ongoing observation, but the observer, at the same time, becomes actively involved in the group processes. The observer as participant is less involved in the actual goings of the group, and her/his main purpose or objective is to function as an observer for the collection of data.
Single-visit interviews are an example of the observer as participant role; the objective often is to come into contact with a great number of people for brief periods of time.

The participant as observer and the observer as participant may be roles in which the researcher finds herself/himself in a position where one role conflicts with the other. However, the participant observer need not assume a rigid stance in anticipation of possible ethical dilemmas. Rather, he can adopt an open stance where he is assessing quite frequently the effects of his behavior on his own research goals and on the goals of others (Phillips, 1971, pp. 168-169).

A closer look at the participant observer role is now appropriate, since this was the means of data collection in the present study. This method was chosen for two reasons. First, communication with the subjects about relationships among the group members is essential to the understanding of those relationships. Also, complete participation would be almost impossible to achieve in the particular organization because the researchers are not trained in the field
of specialization of the organization (gemology). Therefore, a combination of the two techniques—participant observation—was the most beneficial for the collection of data.

Within the participant observation method, both the researcher and the subject are aware that the relationship is one of field research. In the initiating stage of the research, the subjects are made aware of the nature of the research, in a way that they can understand, so that they may feel less threatened by the intrusion of the researcher and research assistant, who are not organization members. Although some initial pretense should be expected, through time and the building of a trusting relationship, barriers will dissolve more easily. The participant observer must constantly be aware that, should any relationship with an informant become too familiar, like that of ordinary friends, the field role is jeopardized in two ways: the informant may identify too strongly with the observer and hence become too much of an observer, and, the observer may identify too strongly with the informant
and hence lose her/his research perspective (Gold, 1958). This area of concern can be checked by the constant communication between the two researchers, who can provide each other with alternative perspectives on the situation.

One of the most difficult obstacles for the participant observer is the selection of relevant phenomena. The observer uses a variety of concepts and frames of reference to categorize each phenomena, which enables the researcher to "organize the incoherent jumble of the real world" (Phillips, 1971, p. 163). For example, as a communicologist, the researcher has had exposure to various theories of verbal and nonverbal behavior; as an observer, the researcher can rely on that knowledge for the interpretation of phenomena. A choice between phenomena must be made at some point in time because the observer is continually bombarded by an extraordinary amount and variety of stimuli.

The Interview Method

The observational method is complemented in the field setting by the interview process. Observation
alone is insufficient for three reasons: 1) the organization is usually being manifested in several locations simultaneously, so one specific situation is not representative of the organizational process; 2) the organization usually has been in existence long before the researcher enters the scene; and 3) many of the features of the organization or determinants of behavior (e.g., motives, intentions, interests and perceptions of the members) are only imperfectly inferable by observation (McCall and Simmons, 1969). McCall and Simmons (1969) discuss ways to counter these deficiencies through the use of interviews.

The interview is a face to face interpersonal role situation in which one person, the interviewer, asks a person being interviewed, the respondent, questions designed to obtain answers pertinent to the research problem (Kerlinger, 1973, p. 481).

The researcher can use the interview to gain knowledge concerning the motives, intentions and interpretations of organization members. This process provides a check on the internal validity of some of the inferences made by the observer (McCall and Simmons, 1969). According
to Phillips (1971), the "interview is generally superior for specifying overt goals in a situation where the respondent has no reason to distort the image he/she projects" (1971, p. 162). Data collected in an interview will usually provide information pertaining to goals of which the individual is aware.

Procedures

The method of data collection was participant observation combined with interviews. The target organization was completely aware of the research process and its purpose. The organization is a small retail jewelry store in a suburban area in the Eastern United States and consists of 16 full and part-time employees.

The data collected in the observation process was recorded by handwritten notes. Notes were made by the observer on communication events during observation. Once the process began, the observer was able to gain a perspective on the organization, its functions and processes, providing the researcher with a frame of
reference in which to interpret the observed events. This understanding made the selection of observations more manageable. An initial meeting with the executive members of the organization was used to acquire the formal organization structure. Also, an initial group meeting with all organization members was used to introduce the researchers and the research process. From this point, the observer was able to work through the existing structure of the organization to collect data. This first phase of the fieldwork was also a period of general observations: the researcher relied upon her background in the area of organizational communication and general notions about the research problem to maintain sensitivity to the data which would, in turn, guide the researcher in the selection of phenomena (McCall and Simmons, 1969).

As a participant observer, the researcher strives to achieve a friendly relationship with the subjects (Gold, 1958). However, as Simmel (1950) states:

intimacy is not based on the content of the relationship... Inversely, certain external situations or moods may move us to make very personal statements and confessions usually
reserved for our closest friends only, to relatively strange people. That 'intimate' content, although we have perhaps never revealed it before and thus limit it entirely to this particular relationship, does nevertheless not become the basis of its form, and thus leaves it outside the sphere of intimacy (1950, p. 127).

When the content of the interaction is intimate in this sense, neither party feels compelled to maintain the relationship for more than a short period of time: the relationship is one of sociological strangers (Gold, 1958). Whenever the participant observer feels that the field relationship is taking the role of intimate form (i.e., the need for continuation of the relationship in any way other than through the context in which the relationship was initiated), the researcher must leave the field to re-clarify her/his self-conceptions and her/his role relationships before continuing the research (Gold, 1958).

At the conclusion of each observation period, three to five hours in length, the observer expanded upon and gave more depth to the written comments in audio tape recorded sessions, providing an opportunity to more elaborately describe the observed events. The
observation periods averaged between 12 and 15 hours per week. Random selection of three days per week insured the collection of diverse data. The data collection was approximately five weeks in length, seventy hours of observation. Guides for determining the length of the data collection phase included the available time of the observer and interviewer, and the repetition of the data (as patterns become evident), as they were collected. The rationale for using these guides was the constant comparative method of data analysis, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

**Interviews**

Concurrent with the collection of observation data, the interview process was initiated with the organization members. The interviews were slightly structured in order to keep the interest of the interviewee on the topic. Unstructured, or unstandardized interviews are flexible and open. Their content, sequence and wording are the responsibility of the interviewer (Kerlinger, 1973). This limited structure allowed the interviewee to discuss information regarding
the communication processes within both the formal
and informal organization under investigation. The
interviewee was encouraged to present ideas, concepts,
and attitudes about her/his role in the organization.
The interviews also provided the researcher with an
opportunity to obtain information about the system
which may not have been apparent to the observer.

Browning (1973) also used the unstructured
interview as a source of data. Some of the types of
questions Browning (1973) used were:

1. open-ended, general. 'What can
   you tell me that you think will
   help me understand this place?'

2. open-ended, slightly directive.
   'What are people here concerned
   about?'

3. open-ended, directive, personal.
   'What do you like most about your
   job? What gripes you most about
   your job?'

4. open-ended, topic directive.
   'How are decisions made around
   here? Can you give me some
   examples?' (Browning, 1973, p. 30).

These questions were asked in the interview process
along with the following:
1. "Who do your work most closely with?"
2. "Who do you go to for information about work?"
3. "Who do you get personal information from?"
4. "What are your concerns as an employee?"
5. "What are management's concerns?"
6. "What were your first impressions of this organization?"

This process allowed the personnel of the organization to discuss their relationships within the organization. The data were enhanced and clarified by the perceptions of the system members, as this type of information can only be provided by the people who are involved in the events that were observed. Information from the interviews added depth and richness to the observed data.

The recording of information in the interview process was similar to that of the observation process. Handwritten notes were made with the permission of the respondents, and elaborated upon in audio tape recorded sessions after the completion of the interview. Each interview averaged one hour in length and followed a nondirective, in-depth format. The
interviews varied in length, but averaged five hours total per work week. Interviewees were selected during the observation initial phases. The primary data were those data collected during the observation process. The selection of interviewees was contingent upon the events that were observed, and the interviews were used largely to enhance the observation data. Using this method, the data dealt consistently with communicative events. The observer was in constant communication with the interviewer following the completion of each observation session and aided in the selection of interviewees and possible issues to be probed. The interviews were conducted by the research assistant who was a graduate student in Communication.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the data collected both in the observation process and the interview process followed that provided by McCall and Simmons (1969) and Glaser and Strauss (1967). McCall and Simmons (1969) address the issue of qualitative analysis in social research.
Glaser and Strauss (1967) formulate the method of constant comparison as an alternative to the method of analytic induction.

Several limitations surround the method of analytic induction. Specifically, the requirement of complete universals is particularly constraining, and may cause important data to be excluded. Robinson (1951) contends that analytic induction provides the researcher with only the necessary conditions for the phenomenon to be explained. Consequently, this method does not enable the researcher to predict. When a case does not fit within the hypothesis, either the phenomenon or the hypothesis is redefined. To avoid the inclusion of a number of potentially deviant cases, the analytic induction method strives for a limiting of the universal. In other words, the hypotheses that are formulated should have a limited range of applicability, "to insure that the same process functions in all the cases to be examined" (Robinson, 1951, p. 814).
To account for this limitation of the analytic induction method, Glaser and Strauss (1967) propose the use of the constant comparative technique, whereby categories are developed in the process of grouping together incidents with the same general properties. In this way, the data are not forced to fit pre-conceived hypotheses, rather the data create the hypotheses, and hence, the theory. This process has four steps:

1. comparing incidents applicable to each category,
2. integrating categories and their properties,
3. delimiting the theory, and
4. writing the theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, pp. 105-113).

The constant comparison method, according to Glaser and Strauss (1967), uses each incident as a potential source for a category, a grouping of incidents that are related through their common characteristics. As incidents are reviewed in the coding process, they are compared with previous incidents coded into a category. When similarities are discovered, the
incident is included in the category. If no similarities are apparent, a new category is created. Throughout the coding process, each incident is coded into as many categories as possible—the categories are not mutually exclusive. This method forces the analyst to consider the diversity of the data.

As more incidents are coded into a category, the similarities of the incidents will become the properties of the category. The need for creating new categories and making modifications will occur less and less often as the analyst compares the next incidents of a category to its properties. Later, adjustments are made generally to clarify logic, omit irrelevant properties, integrate elaborating details of the properties into the major outline of inter-related categories, and reduce terminology. With the reduction of terminology, two requirements of theory are achieved: 1) the parsimony of variables and their formulation, and 2) range in the applicability of the theory to a variety of situations. Through this integration of categories and their properties and
the delimiting of the theory, the analyst achieves theoretical saturation of the categories.

The final stage of the constant comparison method is the writing of the theory. The analyst uses the coded data and notes recorded about the categories during the coding process as the major themes of the theory. The writing of the theory begins with further development of the discussion made in the notes. The analyst can refer to the coded data for clarification or validation of suggested hypotheses, to eliminate gaps in the theory and to provide illustrations (Glaser and Strauss, 1967).

The constant comparative technique forces the analyst to consider diversity in the data. Diversity refers to the comparison of each incident with other incidents, or with properties of a category, in terms of as many similarities and differences as possible. This method is contrasted to coding for proof as Robinson (1951) views the method of analytic induction. The constant comparative method facilitates "generating theories of process, sequence and change pertaining
organizations, positions and social interaction" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p. 114).

**Summary**

This chapter discussed the methods of this research project. Grounded theory, as developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) was the foundation upon which the methods are built. McCall and Simmons' (1969) clarification of participant observation provided the framework for the collection of observation data and was elaborated upon with additional theoretical support. The collection of both observation and interview data in the field situation, and the analysis of that data was reviewed. The next phase was the collection of data at the research site and the analysis of the data.
CHAPTER THREE

RESULTS

The data collected in the field must be coded and interpreted to develop hypotheses. Following Glaser and Strauss' (1967) method of constant comparison, relationships among the categories, derived from the coding of incidents, must be identified. These relationships, in effect, become the hypotheses which, in turn, fit together to form the grounded theory. In this section of the research report, the data analysis will be reviewed. From that point, the categories will be defined in terms of the incidents that are included in each category. Lastly, the hypotheses, relationships among the categories, will be stated and diagrammed.

Data Collection

Returning from the field, the observer and interviewer possessed handwritten notes. These notes were used in de-briefing sessions that were audio tape
recorded as a basis for elaboration of the events observed by the researcher (in observation) and the research assistant (in interviews). The observer elaborated upon her notes in private sessions at the conclusion of each data collection day. The observation data were collected in a period of fifteen days over the course of five weeks, alternating days of the week and time of day to provide a more comprehensive view of the organization. Daily periods of observation averaged three hours in length.

The interviewer had to manage the collection of interview data based on three variables: 1) the availability of the interviewer; 2) the availability of the interviewee, dictated by when that person was scheduled to work; and 3) the affordability of temporarily relieving the interviewee of her/his organizational duties. As a result, the interviewer was forced to schedule interviews at non-peak hours for the retail organization. A total of sixteen interviews were conducted during the five weeks of the data collection phase. Each interview averaged one
hour in length. The notes taken by the interviewer during the sessions were elaborated upon in audio tape recorded de-briefing sessions with the primary researcher (observer).

Data Analysis

Once notes taken by the observer and interviewer had been transformed onto audio tapes, these tapes were transcribed into approximately 300 pages of manuscript. The researcher reviewed the manuscripts searching for incidents, looking for complete thoughts or complete acts of behavior (Browning, 1973). When an incident was located, it was identified by placing the entire unit in parentheses, followed by a notation of OB (observation) and a number, or IV (interview) and a number. Incidents were numbered consecutively from 1 to 426 (observation) and from 1 to 424 (interview), yielding a total of 850 incidents to be coded. Additional material contained in the manuscripts, which was not defined as part of the incidents, was set apart by brackets and given a notation of BG (background material). This background material consisted
of the perceptions of the researchers and discussions for clarification of the events. Background material was not included in this coding process (Browning, 1973).

The incidents ranged in length from one sentence to several paragraphs and had many different forms. Some incidents consisted solely of verbal behavior. Other incidents were descriptions of non-verbal behavior. Incidents also consisted of a combination of verbal and nonverbal behavior. A sampling of incidents is offered in Appendix A.

Coding Process

The coding of data was completed in two stages. The first stage was coding incidents into categories and identifying the relationships among the categories. The second stage also involved the coding of incidents into categories, but was performed by the research assistant who had acted as the interviewer. It is important to discuss this process as an introduction to the creation of categories which follow.
Each incident was evaluated to ascertain its major properties. Since no categories existed prior to the coding process, and the data were used as a source of creating categories, a method of reviewing the incidents designed to avoid an early bias in the development of categories needed to be implemented.

To give equal importance to the observation data and interview data, the researcher proceeded through the coding process in sets of ten incidents. Ten observation incidents were individually evaluated, then ten interview incidents, moving through the data until all observation and interview incidents were coded. This method also helped to prevent the coding of incidents from becoming too routine. A schedule of coding 160 incidents per day was implemented after the first day of coding. This was done for two reasons: 1) to prevent fatigue of the researcher, and 2) to again avoid coding in a routine manner. The time spent on this process averaged four hours per day for six days.

Because the coding of incidents into categories necessarily involves subjective assessment, the second
stage of the coding process was executed. As the researcher moved through the incidents, she became more keenly aware of the personal interpretation of the incidents as a factor in how they were coded. Therefore, the research assistant was called on to also code the incidents and hence provide a check on the reliability of the initial coding. Browning (1973) expressed similar concerns in his organizational communication grounded theory research.

The researcher worked with the assistant in coding sessions. An introductory session was used to explain the coding process and the categories. The method of coding incidents in groups of ten and alternating between observation and interview incidents was again utilized. The research assistant reviewed each incident individually and stated either a category or categories into which the incident fit. When discrepancies arose between the researcher's coding and the assistant's coding, the two discussed the difference and arrived at a mutual coding decision. When a mutual decision could not be reached, the
incident was discarded. At the conclusion of this second stage of coding, a total of 12 incidents were discarded. There remained, then, 838 incidents in the data: 418 observation incidents and 420 interview incidents. Two hundred and ninety incidents were reassigned in this stage.

**Category Development**

Categories were created by reviewing each incident and identifying its major properties. Index cards were used to record a phrasing of the property of the incident and a notation of the incidents included in that category by its identifier (OB or IV) and a number. As the coding process continued, each incident's properties were compared to all existing categories. Since the categories were not mutually exclusive, the incident was included in every appropriate category. If an appropriate category did not exist, a new category was created.

Throughout the coding process, four groups of categories emerged and took on properties of incidents.
The four groups—Interpersonal Relationships, Conflict, Task and Power—contained categories which focused on different aspects of the group label. Category labels were derived from a single phrase which most concisely and accurately characterized the properties of the incidents included in the category. The formulation of these groups of categories indicated the relationships among the categories. The development of these relationships will be discussed in detail in Chapter Four of this report.

The Categories

The discussion of each of the 22 categories includes a brief description of the category properties and illustrative samples of incidents included in the category. The number of incidents in the category and the percentage of the total that each category represents is presented as an indicator of the frequency of the category.

Category #1

EXPRESSION OF HUMANISTIC ATTITUDE, 57 incidents, 6.8% of the total.
This category is characterized by properties of caring. Incidents included in this category contain expressions of feeling like a family, having strong personal relationships with organization members. For example:

"I like the closeness we have with each other."

"They are very much like a family, they all really care about each other."

"The company has always been very family. It has always been smaller and [we] have always tried to encourage that feeling of family."

"When I first got there, they were very generous, they were always saying 'hi,' seemed very interested in me."

Category #2

INFORMAL GROUP DELINEATION, 40 incidents, 4.8% of the total.

This category is characterized by indications of who communicates with whom on an interpersonal level. Included in this category are incidents which indicate how informal groups are determined and which organization members see each other outside of work on a personal basis. Also, expressions of which
organization members an individual personally likes or dislikes and why are included. For example:

"X is my favorite...he's so laid back, nothing touches him, I've never seen him angry."

"A and B [are the people that] I usually go to for gossip."

"There was a time that I was very close to C and D, now I try not to be ....It takes the professional approach out of doing business. There is no separation between business and personal."

"I get to blow off steam with X and let things out...which I don't feel I could do with my subordinates or other superiors."

Category #3
EXPRESSION OF STRESS, 27 incidents, 3.2% of the total.

Properties of this category are expressions of feeling stress and also expressions of sensitivity to tension, or stressful situations. For example:

"I was away in September...and when I got back, I could feel that everyone was really edgy."

"I can feel tension between myself and X... I don't think it's just the position...it's not necessarily just work, but it's more than that."

"I went to Y and said 'You've got a bunch of unhappy people back there.'"
"...well people talk...it's usually around Christmas. We're tired and we've got a lot of hours and we hate this, we hate that, you get on my nerves, I get on your nerves, etc."

Category #4
INFORMAL COMMUNICATION, 170 incidents, 20.3% of the total.

This category is characterized by personal information. Included in this category are incidents where the communication is not organization or task related. Also included in this category are incidents which indicate an avoidance of informal communication, when an individual expresses a lack of interest in informal communication. For example:

E is rubbing F's shoulders, F is sitting there smiling and laughing...they joke with D who is sitting nearby.

B, who is working on a task, stops, walks over to X and asks...about a marinade sauce and they start talking about dinner recipes.

X just finished with a customer...Y walks over to her and tells her about his day at school.

"Everyone knows what everybody else is doing...they have personal talks during opening—you know, the good news and the bad news of what happened over the weekend."
X jokes with Z about the weight she gained on vacation.

Category #5

EXPRESSION OF INCOMPATIBILITY, 32 incidents, 3.8% of the total.

Properties of this category include expressions of conflict with respect to work styles and identification of opposing personalities which inhibits task completion. This category is characterized by tensions which specifically relate to the carrying out of organization goals or individual tasks. Also included in this category are expressions of feeling that a co-worker is not competent. For example:

"...X acts like she is a lot older and that is sort of belittling in some respects....I like X personally, but just can't work with her."

"Y and I just cannot work together."

"C goofs off completely, he doesn't care about the job, he won't take any responsibility. He doesn't do his job and when he messes up, he won't face the customer."

"B and I have some problems sometimes because I don't see myself as being terribly proficient...I feel that I am 'unorganized and not proficient.'"
"If we lose customers, it's his fault. It's his lack of concern and lack of caring that keeps him from getting his job done, that [angers] the customers, that makes them not come back."

Category #6

EXPRESSION OF CHANGE IN MOTIVATION, 40 incidents, 4.8% of the total.

Properties of this category stem from motivation with respect to organization or task goals. Included in this category are expressions which indicate an individual's dissatisfaction with their role in the organization, an awareness of a change in motivation in others, and sensitivity to motivating others. For example:

"X, my mom, has been here almost 3 years and...she looks in the want ads every night now."

"I don't feel that I have motivated [the employees] enough lately... because they are not happy."

"I was hired and fired about 4 times here, at one point because I didn't do my work."

"...well, I just had a two-hour lunch and now I'm [leaving early] to play racquetball."
Category #7

AVOID CONFLICT, 15 incidents, 1.8% of the total.

This category's properties are the avoidance of confrontations and statements indicating one's dislike of conflict. Included in this category are incidents which indicate that the individual or others feel that conflict is bad and should be avoided. For example:

"I don't like to be the 'bad guy.' I don't like to correct people, to make them cry."

"From past experiences, [management] doesn't care for 'personal conflicts' and personnel conflicts. They don't like dissent, they have never handled well nor liked conflict."

"...a lot of times instead of confronting the person who you should be confronting, people talk...behind people's backs."

"Whenever I have a complaint...I was told to go to [management] and not to go to the person or to the source."

Category #8

RESOLVE CONFLICT, 26 incidents, 3.1% of the total.

This category is characterized by the resolution of conflict between organization members. Included
in this category are expressions that conflict should be recognized and dealt with, that conflict must be resolved, and soliciting opinions from other organization members is a means of resolving conflict. For example:

"If it's a conflict...between two people, that should be worked out because otherwise, it gets taken out on other people and also on the customers."

"...so in February, I got really fed up and called the Wage Board to file discrimination charges."

"...problems are dealt with. [Management] doesn't leave them go, they are dealt with."

"[Management] did clear the air...she asked that particular person to leave. She gave her severance pay and told her...don't stay the last two weeks. [The owner] said we just didn't need the tension...she listened to everybody...to what people had to say about it."

Category #9

STRUCTURAL AMBIGUITY, 96 incidents, 11.5% of the total.

Properties of this category are the expression of a lack of knowledge or understanding of organizational structure, rules or policy, and expressions of feeling that the organizational structure doesn't work. Also
included in this category are expressions of a lack of communication regarding organizational goals. For example:

"I get a 20% discount and that discount applies to your immediate family. However, other people were told they only get a 10% discount. I don't know who gets the 10% and who gets the 20%, what do they consider immediate family, etc. None of this...is defined."

"I'll pick up the newspaper and find out we're advertising a sale or something and I had no idea....If you're advertising something, let me know....I'm the manager and [the advertising manager] has the responsibility of telling me."

"X put [the chain of command] down on paper...but it's just on paper, it doesn't really work that way. X is at the top of the triangle, second level is Y and Z, third level is me and B... but it usually doesn't work that way."

"There is no real formal channel. X has an open-door policy for opinions, gripes, comments, etc.; however, people don't go to her and ask her, they don't take advantage of that. So that says to me just how open door is it, or just how much do they trust her. They don't feel that it's even going to have any effect."
Category #10

EXPRESSION OF EXPECTATIONS/PERFECTIONISM, 36 incidents, 4.3% of the total

This category is characterized by indications of high expectations of the employees and perfectionism. Included in this category are expressions of disliking mistakes, working diligently and being efficient. For example:

"She expects me to do a lot in a very short period of time."

"...she expects you to come in there and work as hard as you possibly can for nine hours. And everything has to be done quickly and it's got to be done perfectly."

"I always question myself...I don't assume I've done my best job and I carry it over to [the employees].... I expect them to constantly question themselves and not to suffice. There's a right way to do things, a wrong way, and there's my way."

"...she'll do that a lot, she's always making mistakes. She's been here for two months and makes, what I think, are uncalled-for mistakes."

"...oh, we're not allowed to have dull moments."
Category #11

FOLLOW THROUGH ON TASK, 70 incidents, 8.4% of the total.

This category has properties which include solely working on a task, not easily distracted from a task, completion of a task started but not finished and follow-through on being told to do a task. Included in this category is initiating a task, and initiating communication about tasks or organizational concerns.

For example:

X asks Y if there is anything she can do after she finished a transaction. They find an error while going over some of the transactions F had completed today. They work it out together.

Y is arranging pearls in a case, B is standing next to her. B asks if she can see one of the strands. Y says, "You can when I'm done."

As soon as C finishes the task that she has been working on, she does the [task] that D asked her to do previously, without asking any questions, without any mention to D.

Z is cleaning...under the counter. Y approaches...talks about her dinner... Z continues working.

X says something to Y, but Y says, "Sorry, I have so much to get done here." X shakes her head as Y walks away with her hands full of orders.
Category #12
ASKING FOR INFORMATION/ASSISTANCE, 95 incidents, 11.3% of the total.

Asking for explanations, information sharing, getting questions answered, and obtaining information from source books are properties of this category. Also included in this category are direct requests for information or assistance with respect to task completion. For example:

H says to G, "Need any help?" G responds that she knows how to do the task, but verifies the procedure with H.

A asks B where something is behind the counter. B gives an explanation and A responds with a confused look. B walks over to A and shows her exactly where the information (that A is looking for) is located.

X asks Y for information in order to complete a task. They walk into the shop area together, then X comes back out and completes the task with her customer.

"...a lot of people ask questions...I have a lot of questions...most of my questions are answered."

X is looking for a piece of jewelry... A walks towards her and X asks A if she would "help me" find the piece.
Category #13

TASK SHARING, 112 incidents, 13.4% of the total.

This category is characterized by the property of individuals working jointly on completing a task. Included in this category is task-oriented communication, communication about a task that individuals are working on together and task sharing. Additional properties of this category are doing favors, offering suggestions, offering assistance, and completing a task for another who started the task. For example:

D notices that a particular customer is still waiting for X. She goes to X...and tells him. X is busy (with another customer) so D makes the customer comfortable while they wait for X.

A walks over to Y...and asks him about a calculator. Y gets up and walks with A to get the calculator.

B is working on a piece for C, calls C back into the shop and tells her the information back there. B follows C back to the customer and shares the same information with the customer that she had shared with C. B then stands back and C completes the task.

B asks X if she can leave early. X smiles and says that B can leave early if A comes back from dinner early. E happens to be walking by...and offers to cover for B so that she can leave.
Category #14

TASK SPECIALIZATION, 60 incidents, 7.2% of the total.

Properties of this category are specialization of duties and delineation of task procedure by another. Another property of this category is the understanding that organization members have different and sometimes unique organization roles. For example:

"X is really the only one in the organization that has a daily deadline...except for Y."

"If [management] wants to pay someone $10.00 and me $1.00 an hour, that's none of my business. I never question [management]."

"I talk to A when I have questions about appraisals...to B about ordering and packaging...C about appraisals."

[re: your duties] "...appraisals...advertising details, maintaining box supplies and sundries...answer specific questions on diamonds, designing, handling diamond customers."

[re: your duties] "...customers, laying out merchandise, tagging and filing."
Category #15

ADMIT MISTAKES, 14 incidents, 1.7% of the total.

The major property of this category is the overt admission of a mistake. Also included is apologizing for having made a mistake. For example:

A asks X how to correct an error that she just made on the cash register.

B explains to X about forgetting to clock out yesterday when she was gone for an hour [during work] at the store.

C is working on wedding invitations. Y had made a mistake in wording an order and C wants to figure it out. They figure out the problem together. As they finish, Y says, "That's why I never got involved with invitations, someday I'll learn to do it right."

Z tells X about a mistake [Z] made earlier today.

B says to Y, "...there is a mistake I made." Y helps B correct the error.

Category #16

EXPRESSION OF PROFESSIONALISM/DEDICATION, 84 incidents, 10% of the total.

Career advancement goals, feeling good about your job, wanting more responsibility and accepting responsibility are properties of this category. Other
properties are expression of integrity and professionalism. For example:

[re: your concerns] "...doing a good job, knowing what I'm doing, looking nice, being on time, learning something new every day."

"...you know that it's not just a job, it's a career."

"...another concern of the employees is to keep the reputation of the store."

"I like doing the best job that I can."

[re: employee concerns] "...career, how they can grow with the business, how they can get more knowledge and make themselves worth more."

"They [management] expect you to be a professional and everybody usually is."

Category #17

POSITIVE FEEDBACK, 17 incidents, 2% of the total.

This category is characterized by confirmation of a job well done, feeling secure in your job, and feeling no pressure. Also included as properties of this category are receiving raises and as a result, the expression of feeling that a procedure or system works well. For example:

"I liked [doing] jewelry repairs, but they took me out of that and...told
me...that I had already achieved that level and that I was going on."

A walks by B carrying a task that she has been working on. B smiles and says, "Oh, you've finished." A smiles back and confirms. B says, "Well, you said you would finish the day you got back [from vacation] and you did. Good."

"I like the relaxed situation...there's no pressure...I'm not pressured."

"I'm satisfied with the responsibility and I'll probably get more. I'm pleased to be doing what I'm doing after only three years and feel that I am being rewarded for being a good worker."

Category #18

EXPRESSION OF HAVING POWER, 55 incidents, 6.6% of the total.

This category is characterized by the expression of having power within the organization. Properties of this category are expressions of being able to solve problems that no one else can solve, reprimanding others and feeling indispensable. For example:

"...I don't answer to too many people."

"...a lot of people seek my opinion... I know what's going on before everybody else does."

"...I'm not under the same pressures as others are around here. I don't have to impress anybody...people around here
know that if they try to retaliate against me, I can do it just as badly, three times worse."

"Usually I [discuss] things with X to make him feel important."

"I like my authoritative position, I like authority, I like to use it."

"We just really can't work together... it's a power thing....She can't touch me and she knows it, as much as how I work gets on her nerves, there's not a damn thing she can do about it."

Category #19

EXPRESSION OF INSECURITY, 55 incidents, 6.6% of the total.

Expressions of feeling insecure and feeling overwhelmed are properties of this category. Also included is the expression of fear of management and expressions of feeling that your contribution is not recognized. For example:

"...you really get overwhelmed when you go in and you need to know all this [information]...they seem to expect 100%, and that scared me."

"I almost quit once because of the money, but I don't have the guts to ask X for a raise."

"I really hate being at the bottom of the corporate totem pole...just about everybody is higher up than I am."
"When I first got there, and even now, I still fear X."

"...most of the salespeople feel threatened by [me]."

Category #20

GIVING EXPLANATIONS, 40 incidents, 4.8% of the total.

This category has the properties of controlling a conversation, giving explanations or training, and giving specific directions. Another property is written communication or one-way communication. For example:

There is a note taped on the time clock...it reads: "To All: Please see X about new lay-away form! The Management."

B provides C with instructions on how to complete an ongoing task. She gives very explicit directions.

Y interrupts A who is working on a task. Y tells her there is something that he wants her to look for. They stand together, he looks through a catalog, gives her an explanation of what he wants done, and tells her that he'll put the catalog in the watch room. He puts the catalog away, walks past A again and gives more instructions.

D asks F a question. F says, "Look at the explanation on the register and if you still have problems, come back and ask me then." After D leaves, F says, "That way they learn where to look for the information instead of asking every time."
Category #21

OVERSEEING A TASK, 37 incidents, 4.4% of the total.

Properties of this category are overseeing tasks, manipulating others to get work done and checking on task progress. For example:

"I started pulling spot checks on A. I would go in and find out that he was not doing his work consistently...I would go in and say, 'Okay, A, today is May 15 and this job, this job and this job are due, they are all due early, get them done.'"

"...there are stock items sitting on A's bench that have been there between six months and two years and he hasn't done it, so I started making up names for this stock and putting a name and a due date so that he would get them done."

"I still have a tendency to lean over people's shoulders."

"I started telling A that things are due a week ahead of time...if it's due on the 17th, I tell him it's due on the 10th, by then it may get done by the 17th."

X approaches Y and asks if she has any questions about the lay-away plan. Y checks her understanding of the procedure with X.

X does a follow-up with Z. "Did you find a place for the pendants?" Z confirms, the two of them walk over to the place and discuss the location.
FLEXIBILITY, 34 incidents, 4.1% of the total.

Properties of this category are the ability to make judgment decisions, schedule flexibility, and understanding different situations and special needs. Also included are expressions of being able to do what you want to do and the ability to function in a variety of roles. For example:

"Certain people are going to require more instruction, less instruction, certain people aren't going to be able to handle some chores until... after they've been in the organization...a while."

"In terms of rules and regulations, I try not to have absolutes. There is nothing that is black and white."

"...it's very comfortable, it's very informal and you get very individual treatment."

"I can leave when I want to and...work at the rate that I want to."

"You can really do what you want, nobody tells you what to do."

"...when you are sick, you don't have to come in...if you really don't feel well, you can call without being afraid of saying, 'I'm sick, I can't come in.'"

"In sales, you do what you want."
These 22 categories represent the various types and forms of communication within the subject organization. The analysis of the data, which yielded the categories, provided insights into relationships among the categories; that is, hypotheses about communication in the organization. The hypotheses generated four groups of communication behavior: Interpersonal Relationships, Conflict, Task and Power. For each group, a discussion of the relationships among the categories will be accompanied by a diagram and a statement of the hypotheses for that group. A listing of the categories is included in Table 3.1.

The Interpersonal Relationships Group

Interpersonal communication in the organization is represented by five categories: Informal Communication, Expression of Humanistic Attitude, Expression of Stress, Informal Group Delineation and Task Sharing. The relationships among these categories are depicted in Figure 3.1.

Informal Communication is the cornerstone of this group. Within the organization, Informal
Table 3.1

The Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>#1</td>
<td>Expression of Humanistic Attitude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#2</td>
<td>Informal Group Delineation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#3</td>
<td>Expression of Stress</td>
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<tr>
<td>#4</td>
<td>Informal Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#5</td>
<td>Expression of Incompatibility</td>
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<tr>
<td>#6</td>
<td>Expression of Change in Motivation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#7</td>
<td>Avoid Conflict</td>
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<tr>
<td>#8</td>
<td>Resolve Conflict</td>
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<tr>
<td>#9</td>
<td>Structural Ambiguity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#10</td>
<td>Expression of Expectations/Perfectionism</td>
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<tr>
<td>#11</td>
<td>Follow Through on Task</td>
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<tr>
<td>#12</td>
<td>Asking for Information/Assistance</td>
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<tr>
<td>#13</td>
<td>Task Sharing</td>
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<tr>
<td>#14</td>
<td>Task Specialization</td>
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<tr>
<td>#15</td>
<td>Admit Mistakes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#16</td>
<td>Expression of Professionalism/Dedication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#17</td>
<td>Positive Feedback</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#18</td>
<td>Expression of Having Power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#19</td>
<td>Expression of Insecurity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#20</td>
<td>Giving Explanations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#21</td>
<td>Overseeing a Task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#22</td>
<td>Flexibility</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Expression of Humanistic Attitude

Expression of Stress

Informal Communication

Task Sharing

Informal Group Delineation

Figure 3.1

The Interpersonal Relationships Group

(+) denotes positive relationship
(-) denotes negative relationship
Communication is affected by Task Sharing, a non-communication variable. The more that individuals work on tasks together, the more likely they are to communicate about non-task issues. Sharing work space and having a common goal create a foundation for furthering those employees' communication. Task Sharing, then, also influences who communicates with whom on an informal level; i.e., Informal Group Delineation. As individuals work together more frequently and communicate informally, friendships develop which continue outside the organization.

Expression of Stress affects Informal Group Delineation, as those individuals who feel uncomfortable will be influenced when deciding whether or not to associate with others. The Expression of Stress can serve as a force which segregates employees on an informal basis since they may not be able to avoid certain others on a formal, organizational basis.

As individuals Express Stress, their Informal Communication will be more select and less frequent. The Expression of Feeling Stress will result in fewer
Expressions of Feeling Humanistic. That is, when an individual expresses, or is aware of, Stress, they withdraw from the "family": the orientation of everyone in the organization as informally united. The Expression of Humanistic Attitude, then, is also related to Informal Communication. As the organization members feel more like a family, they will communicate about non-task issues more frequently.

The relationships yield the following testable hypotheses, the first element of the grounded theory:

H.1. As Task Sharing becomes more frequent, Informal Communication will occur more frequently.

H.2. An increase in Task Sharing will yield an increase in Informal Group Delineation.

H.3. As individuals Express Stress more frequently, they will be more selective of Informal Groups.

H.4. As an individual Expresses Stress more frequently, the less frequently that individual will Communicate Informally.

H.5. The more frequently Stress is Expressed, the less frequently Humanistic Expressions occur.

H.6. As Expression of Humanistic Attitude decreases, Informal Communication will decrease.
The Conflict Group

Conflict in the organization has various forms, as is illustrated in Figure 3.2. In the subject organization, conflict is a factor in eight categories and their relationships.

A tendency to Avoid Conflict on the part of organization members has a direct affect on Admitting Mistakes and Resolving Conflict. As an individual Avoids Conflict, they are less likely to Admit their Mistakes, since admission of errors opens the door for criticism, or conflict regarding tasks or organizational goals. Also, as Conflict is Avoided, discussions on issues which lead to Conflict Resolution will be avoided. The lower the frequency of dealing with conflict, the less often individuals will Express Incompatibility. An Expression of Change in Motivation, the lack of motivation to achieve organizational goals, is directly related to Expressions of Incompatibility. As a person loses interest in their work, task completion becomes less important and conflict about task completion will occur more frequently as others compensate for
Figure 3.2

The Conflict Group

(+) denotes positive relationship

(−) denotes negative relationship
that individual's lack of task responsibility. Expression of Change in Motivation is countered by Flexibility, a non-communication variable, but supported by another non-communication variable, Structural Ambiguity. As management provides a less rigid structure for task completion, employees gain a sense of job worth and in turn set higher goals for performance. Similarly, greater Flexibility on the part of management will yield a reduction in Structural Ambiguity as the individual gains control over, at least part of, their work life and hence becomes part of the authority structure. As Structural Ambiguity is reduced, Change in Motivation is also reduced.

Expressions of high Expectations or Perfectionism lead to Structural Ambiguity. Setting performance expectations beyond what employees feel is reasonable results in the individual viewing management, or authority figures, as unrealistic. When Perfection is expressed as the only level of performance that is acceptable, individuals will not Admit Mistakes, since doing so would make them appear incompetent.
The relationships among the categories in The Conflict Group yield the following testable hypotheses, the second element of the grounded theory:

H.1. An increase in Avoidance of Conflict leads to a decrease in Admitting Mistakes.

H.2. The more frequently that Conflict is Avoided, the less frequently Conflict will be Resolved.

H.3. As Conflict is Resolved less frequently, there will be fewer Expressions of Incompatibility.

H.4. As Expressions of Change in Motivation increase, there will be an increase in Expressions of Incompatibility.

H.5. The more Flexible the structure for task completion, the fewer Expressions of Change in Motivation an individual will express.

H.6. As Flexibility increases, Structural Ambiguity decreases.

H.7. As Structural Ambiguity decreases, Expressions of Change in Motivation decrease.

H.8. As Expression of Expectations/Perfectionism increases, Structural Ambiguity increases.

H.9. The higher the level of Expectations/Perfectionism, individuals will less frequently Admit Mistakes.
The Task Group

Categories that are based on communication about tasks and task completion are related to form the Task Group. This group consists of seven categories and their relationships. Figure 3.3 depicts the relationships among the categories in this group.

Asking for Information or Assistance is the focal point of the relationships among categories in the Task Group. Asking for Information or Assistance is directly related to Task Sharing. In the subject organization, as an individual expresses a need for information or assistance from another employee in order to complete a task, it follows that they would work together in completing the task. However, the more often that employees Shared Tasks, the less often they would be able to Specialize in task areas. In Sharing Tasks, a commonality develops where employees become interchangeable as each employee gains knowledge in more and more areas of task steps. Similarly, when an individual performs a highly Specialized Task, that individual is less likely to Share the Tasks of others.
Figure 3.3
The Task Group

(+) denotes positive relationship
(-) denotes negative relationship
since **Specialization** sets them apart. In other words, the commonality or interchangeability of employees is counteracted as individuals develop specific areas of expertise. This **Specialization** is a result of expressing **Professionalism and Dedication**. Expressing the desire to excel and to maximize their worth to the organization necessarily leads the individual on the path to **Specialization**, a non-communication variable, as well as to **Follow Through on Tasks**. The dedicated employee has a greater commitment to her/his tasks.

Following a task through to completion is also related to **Asking for Information or Assistance**. By asking for help, the individual is, in effect, attempting to perform a task although s/he may not possess all of the necessary knowledge or skill needed to complete the task and vice versa. Expressing a need for information results in fewer expressions of **Positive Feedback**, or a job well done, from others. This relationship, in turn, leads to a decrease in the desire to **Follow Through on Tasks**. **Positive Feedback** is also affected by **Admitting Mistakes**, which is related to **Asking for**
Information or Assistance. The individuals who Admit their Mistakes are less likely to receive confirmation of good work. However, by admitting to others that they have made an error, the individual may be seeking help for correcting the error. Also, in asking for help, the person may admit that they had made a mistake. Hence, a reciprocal relationship is found between Admitting Mistakes and Asking for Information or Assistance.

The relationships among the seven categories in the Task Group yield the following testable hypotheses, the third element of the grounded theory:

H.1. As Asking for Information or Assistance is increased, Task Sharing is increased.

H.2. As Task Sharing increases, Task Specialization decreases, and vice versa.

H.3. An increase in the Expression of Professionalism/Dedication causes an increase in Task Specialization.

H.4. An increase in the Expression of Professionalism/Dedication leads to an increase in Follow Through on Task.

H.5. Asking for Information or Assistance more often, will increase Follow Through on Task, and vice versa.
H.6. As Asking for Information or Assistance increases, Positive Feedback decreases.

H.7. A decrease in Positive Feedback results in a decrease in Follow Through on Task.


H.9. An increase in Admitting Mistakes leads to an increase in Asking for Information or Assistance, and vice versa.

The Power Group

The Power Group consists of seven categories and the relationships among these categories. This Group of categories is depicted in Figure 3.4. There are two parts of the Power Group: one part is focused on Expression of Having Power, the other part is focused on Flexibility.

Expression of Having Power is affected by three categories: Expression of Insecurity, Overseeing a Task and Giving Explanations. Expression of Having Power and Expression of Insecurity have a reciprocal relationship. When individuals express feelings of having power, they do so in such a way as to make others feel as if they have very little power and vice versa.
Figure 3.4

The Power Group

(+) denotes positive relationship

(-) denotes negative relationship
Also, when an individual Oversees a Task or acts in a managing capacity, they exhibit characteristics of having power. And, when one Gives Explanations, or dominates a conversation, they also exhibit characteristics of having power.

Flexibility is affected by Expression of Expectations/Perfectionism and Structural Ambiguity. These three categories have a cyclical relationship. Expressing high Expectations reduces the appearance of being Flexible since the Expression of Expectations of Perfection in task completion requires a rigid adherence to established procedures and policies. Expression of Expectations also affects Structural Ambiguity. If anticipated levels of performance are set too high, employees view management as unrealistic. With an increase in Structural Ambiguity, management is less responsive and is, then, less Flexible. As employees doubt the effectiveness of management, management responds by becoming less Flexible and more rigid. This relationship will also result in characteristics of high Expectations to be Expressed as
management becomes more strict as a means of counter-acting *Structural Ambiguity*. However, should management appear *Flexible* and employees feel greater control over task completion, *Structural Ambiguity* will occur less frequently.

The two parts of the Power Group are joined by the relationship between *Flexibility* and *Expression of Having Power*. As management expresses characteristics of being *Flexible*, fewer individuals will express feelings of having power. *Flexibility* will reduce the power structure in the organization and create a wider base for control of tasks and, therefore, reduce the amount of power that any one particular individual will have over others.

The two parts of the Power Group are also connected by the relationship among *Expression of Expectations or Perfectionism* and *Expression of Insecurity*. When *Expectations of Perfection* are *Expressed* more often there will be more *Expressions of Insecurity* as individuals will feel pressured to fulfill those expectations. This relationship is
illustrated by organization members responding to management expectations in expressions of feeling overwhelmed or pressured by having to complete certain tasks which they are not comfortable with performing.

The relationships among the categories of the Power Group yield the following testable hypotheses, the fourth element of the grounded theory:

H.1. An increase in Expressions of Having Power leads to an increase in Expressions of Insecurity, and vice versa.

H.2. An increase in Overseeing Tasks leads to an increase in Expressions of Having Power.

H.3. As Giving Explanations increases, Expressions of Having Power increase.

H.4. An increase in Expressions of Expectations/Perfectionism leads to a decrease in Flexibility, and vice versa.

H.5. As Expressions of Expectations/Perfectionism increase, Structural Ambiguity will increase, and vice versa.

H.6. An increase in Structural Ambiguity leads to a decrease in Flexibility, and vice versa.

H.7. An increase in Expressions of Expectations/Perfectionism leads to an increase in Expression of Insecurity.
Summary

This chapter reviewed the method of collecting data through observation and interviews, data analysis, and the coding process. The development of the categories and a description of each category with sample incidents was discussed. Following the discussion of the categories, relationships among the categories, divided into four groups, were presented along with testable hypotheses.

The concluding chapter of this research report will discuss the combination of the four groups into the grounded theory, the importance of the results, problems that were encountered by the researcher in conducting the study and considerations for future research in the area of organizational communication.
CHAPTER FOUR

DISCUSSION

This chapter reviews this research by examining the grounded theory that has been developed, limitations of the study, considerations for future research and future applications of grounded theory.

Communication in the Organization

Following the systems perspective, the parts of the system and their interrelationship must be analyzed. The four groups of categories: Interpersonal Relationships, Conflict, Task and Power must be combined to gain a comprehensive view of communication in the organizational setting. Figure 4.1 depicts the 22 categories and their relationships. Development of this analysis of the system yielded two additional relationships which were not shown when the categories were segregated into groups.
Figure 4.1

Communication in the Organization

(+ ) denotes positive relationship
(- ) denotes negative relationship
Informal Communication is related to two additional categories: Follow Through on Task and Expression of Having Power. As Informal Communication becomes more frequent, Follow Through on Task will occur less frequently. As individuals spend more time Communicating Informally, these individuals will have less time to devote to Task Completion. Also, as Informal Communication increases, there will be fewer Expressions of Having Power. Since the communication will focus on non-task issues and the individuals will be communicating about topics which are not organizationally relevant, the opportunity to Express Having Power within the organization will not occur. For example, when discussing dinner recipes, the expression of organizational power is not appropriate because the topic has no relation to the organization or its goals. In other words, the nature of the conversation transcends organizational limits and the individuals communicate in a fashion more similar to that which might be found outside the context of the workplace.

These relationships can be stated as testable hypotheses which, when combined with the previously
stated hypotheses form the final interconnecting element of the grounded theory:

H.1. As Informal Communication increases, Follow Through on Task decreases.


Combining the four groups of categories provides a comprehensive view of communication in the organization and establishes the relationships among the elements of the system. From this viewpoint, one can see that the categories are related beyond their relationships within each group of categories. That is, some of the categories from the Interpersonal Relationships Group are related to categories in the Task Group and the Power Group. Some of the categories from the Task Group are related to categories in the Conflict Group and relationships exist among categories from the Conflict Group and the Power Group.

Communication in the organization can be interpreted by examining focal points in the relationships among the categories. Informal Communication links the Interpersonal Group and the Task Group as well as
the Power Group. Through Informal Communication, one can affect communication variables which are task-oriented through the non-communication variables, Task Sharing and Follow Through on Task. Also, Informal Communication can be used to affect power-oriented variables through Expression of Having Power.

Follow Through on Task links the Task Group to the Conflict Group. Through the use of this variable, one can indirectly affect conflict variables. The Conflict Group and the Power Group have the greatest number of links. Admit Mistakes, Expression of Change in Motivation, Expression of Expectations/Perfectionism and Flexibility are all variables through which one can affect either conflict variables or power variables.

Through eight variables: Informal Communication, Task Sharing, Follow Through on Task, Admit Mistakes, Expression of Change in Motivation, Expression of Expectations/Perfectionism, Flexibility and Expression of Having Power, a general communication perspective of the organization can be identified. These variables
are the focal points which form the backbone of communication in the organization. Analysis of each of these variables leads to a more in-depth, complex view of organizational communication and can serve as starting points for the practical use of the grounded theory.

In short, the organization consists of four major types of communicative behavior: communication which defines interpersonal relationships within the organization, communication about tasks and organizational goals, communication which leads to or affects conflict within the organization, and communication which singles out sources of power and influence.

Communication in the Organization: The System

Weick (1969) provides an alternative for interpreting systems with positive and negative relationships by analyzing loops which occur within the system. The nature of each loop, according to Weick (1969) is either deviation amplifying—the loop contains an even number of negative relationships and
therefore is unable to correct its deviations, or deviation counteracting—the loop contains an odd number of negative relationships and therefore is self-correcting.

In order to analyze a system with several loops, assuming that the loops have equal importance, the analyst can look at negative cycles for a generalization about the nature of the entire system. In other words, the loops that form the system can be identified as positive, containing an even number of negative relationships; or negative, containing an odd number of negative relationships; and are labeled then as cycles. Determining the total number of cycles, or loops, and their nature, positive or negative, will provide the analyst with a means to predict the fate of the system. In implementing this approach, every possible cycle is included in the analysis. The result of this analysis indicates whether the system as a whole is deviation counteracting or deviation amplifying—whether the system as a whole is self-correcting or not self-correcting.
Utilizing Weick's (1969) approach for the interpretation of Communication in the Organization (Figure 4.1) brings additional insight to the outcome of this system. The system contains a total of 90 cycles, 51 of which are negative cycles. This system with its odd number of negative cycles is therefore deviation counteracting. Communication in the Organization is a system which is self-correcting. The deviation counteracting loops within the system allow it to maintain stability, whereas the deviation amplifying loops provide the system with a means to develop or adjust (Weick, 1969). The combination of the loops into a general perspective of the system indicate that the system as a whole is deviation counteracting and will continue to survive in its present form.

The relationships among the system elements which dictate the life of the organization were presented in Chapter Three and also earlier in this chapter. Since these relationships are the hypotheses of the grounded theory and are critical for
understanding the system, closer inspection of the hypotheses and their development will precede the evaluation of the grounded theory.

**Development of Hypotheses**

The relationships among the categories were developed by the researcher who drew correlations based on the nature of each category. Inadvertently, during the coding process, the researcher arranged the cards for the categories into groups. This arrangement was a result of the researcher classifying each incident by a general property and seeking the category within which the incident most appropriately fit. To expedite the coding process and to avoid confusion, the researcher, with no other purpose in mind, arranged the category cards into four general groups: interpersonal relationships, conflict orientation, task orientation and power orientation. These groups later became the basis for the division of categories and their relationships into groups of communication behavior: Interpersonal Relationships Group, Conflict Group, Task Group and Power Group.
The researcher abandoned the category grouping temporarily to identify the relationships among the categories. For this process, each category was compared with every other category to determine if a correlation could be drawn between categories. Every relationship was noted as being positive or negative and provided the initial 94 hypotheses. For a method of reducing the 94 hypotheses into a more cohesive, concise depiction of communication in the organization, the four groups of communication behavior were re-introduced.

Since the four groups had emerged as an outgrowth of the coding process, this appeared the most appropriate means for classifying relationships among categories. During this stage of theory development, hypotheses which nullified each other were eliminated. Hypotheses which were repetitive were combined and represented by a single hypothesis. Reduction of the hypotheses from 94 to 36 yielded four separate depictions of communicative behavior.

Although quantity of shared incidents was not used as a determining factor in the development of
hypotheses, general notions about shared incidents were a factor. The grouping of the categories resulted, in part, from incidents being coded into more than one category and the juxtaposition of the category cards was generated as repetition of coding into multiple categories occurred. The hypotheses can, however, be analyzed in terms of percentage of shared incidents. Table 4.1 lists the related categories in the order of their presentation as hypotheses.

The percentage of shared incidents ranges from zero to 18.8%. The variance in this range suggests the relative frequency of the hypotheses. Categories which do not share incidents represent those hypotheses developed from correlations drawn by the researcher as a result of the coding process. Category variables can be related to one another without containing cross-coded incidents. For example, an incident which has properties of one category, Task Specialization, would not necessarily, and did not also have properties of another category, Task Sharing; however, a relationship can and does exist among these variables.
Table 4.1

**Percentage of Shared Incidents in Categories**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Task Sharing, Informal Communication</td>
<td>2.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task Sharing, Informal Group Delineation</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expression of Stress, Informal Group Delineation</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expression of Stress, Informal Communication</td>
<td>0.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expression of Stress, Expression of Humanistic Attitude</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expression of Humanistic Attitude, Informal Communication</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoid Conflict, Admit Mistakes</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoid Conflict, Resolve Conflict</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resolve Conflict, Expression of Incompatibility</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expression of Change in Motivation, Expression of Incompatibility</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility, Expression of Change in Motivation</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility, Structural Ambiguity</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structural Ambiguity, Expression of Change in Motivation</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expression of Expectations/Perfectionism, Structural Ambiguity</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expression of Expectations/Perfectionism, Admit Mistakes</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asking for Information/Assistance, Task Sharing</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task Specialization, Task Sharing</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expression of Professionalism/Dedication, Task Specialization</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expression of Professionalism/Dedication, Follow Through on Task</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow Through on Task, Asking for Information/Assistance</td>
<td>6.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asking for Information/Assistance, Positive Feedback</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive Feedback, Follow Through on Task</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admit Mistakes, Positive Feedback</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admit Mistakes, Asking for Information/Assistance</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expression of Having Power/Expression of Insecurity</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overseeing a Task, Expression of Having Power</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giving Explanations, Expression of Having Power</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expression of Expectations/ Perfectionism, Flexibility</td>
<td>1.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expression of Expectations/ Perfectionism, Expression of Insecurity</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal Communication, Follow Through on Task</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal Communication, Expression of Having Power</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Since incidents varied in nature (act and interact), in context and in sequence, hypotheses which do not share incidents were anticipated. In other words, an incident which preceded or followed another incident indicated relationships among categories, but was not cross-coded into those categories. With this understanding of the hypotheses and their development, the grounded theory can now be evaluated.

The Theory

The grounded theory must be reviewed in light of the properties outlined by Glaser and Strauss (1967) to determine its reliability. A grounded theory must have the properties of fitness, understandability, generality and user control (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Following this discussion, the theory will be compared to Browning's (1973) theory for additional evaluation.

The theory fits the substantive area since it is grounded in the daily lives of the organization members. The data, comprised of the observations of
the researcher and the expressions of the organization members in in-depth interviews, are a reflection of the interpersonal communication within the subject organization. The categories, groups of the data, represent the variables which influence interpersonal communication within the organization. The hypotheses, relationships among the categories, are a direct result of the analysis of the data and are not based on pre-conceived notions of the researcher. Therefore, the grounded theory does, in fact, fit the substantive area.

The theory must be understandable to laypersons in the field. In order to achieve understandability, the researcher needed to continually evaluate the theory as it was developed. For example, in the process of developing hypotheses, the researcher began with all possible relationships among the categories. Through four stages of development, these 94 hypotheses were reduced to the 36 hypotheses in the grounded theory. This reduction was necessary for creating a clear and less abstract theory with the intention of making the theory understandable.
To verify understandability, the theory must be presented to laypersons in the field. An informal testing of this requirement was performed by the researcher who presented in written form only the results to a third party who worked in the retail jewelry business, yet had no previous association with or knowledge of the research. It should be noted that the reviewer had no formal training in the area of organizational communication, and was not coached in any way by the researcher. Consequently, the reviewer expressed her interest in the topic and discussed with the researcher her understanding of the theory. With this feedback, the researcher felt confident that the grounded theory was understandable to laypersons; nonetheless, further testing would be necessary to insure this claim. This issue is addressed in the Future Research section later in this chapter.

The grounded theory is situation and time specific, but is sufficiently general so that it may be applied to other similar organizations. The
categories, developed from the incidents, took on properties of the incidents. These properties are generalizations or abstractions of the incidents themselves, as illustrated in Chapter Three of this report. The benefits of conceptualizing the incidents is found not only in the development of the grounded theory, but also in insuring that the theory will be sufficiently abstract so as to be useful in future research.

The grounded theory allows the user control over its application in future research. The broad nature of the categories is indicative of the variety and types of interpersonal communication within an organization and provides the user with the ability to interpret that communication without a rigid structure. In other words, the user is better able to classify the interpersonal communication without losing potentially valuable information by having to force data into rigidly-defined categories. Also, the structure of the theory, divided into four segments permits the user to examine areas of communication.
The user is not forced to apply the theory in its totality. Similarly, individual hypotheses can be of value to user. In these ways, the grounded theory is flexible.

The grounded theory can be reviewed in light of previous theory as another means of evaluation. Since only one other theory of organizational communication has been developed through the grounded theory approach, Browning (1973), a comparison of the results of the two, Browning (1973) and Muto, would indicate areas of verification. The comparison will focus on the categories developed by each researcher since these are the foundation of the hypotheses and the theories.

In the comparison of categories, 12 of Browning's (1973) categories are similar to or the same as 12 of Muto's categories (Table 4.2). These similarities indicate variables identified independently by the researchers in organizations which differed in size, complexity, nature of the organizational goals, and organization membership. The identification of
Table 4.2

Similar Categories: Muto and Browning (1973)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Muto</th>
<th>Browning (1973)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expression of Humanistic Attitude</td>
<td>Expression of Values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal Group Delineation</td>
<td>Coalition Formation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal Communication</td>
<td>Informal-Casual Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoid Conflict</td>
<td>Responses to Conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resolve Conflict</td>
<td>Responses to Conflict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expression of Expectations/Perfectionism</td>
<td>Expression of Expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow Through on Task</td>
<td>Follow Through on Commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asking for Information/Assistance</td>
<td>Request for Information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task Specialization</td>
<td>Expression of Independence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expression of Professionalism/Dedication</td>
<td>Expression of Values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expression of Professionalism/Dedication</td>
<td>Personal Advancement Strategies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expression of Having Power</td>
<td>Power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expression of Having Power</td>
<td>Central Figure in Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structural Ambiguity</td>
<td>Expression of Distrust</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
similar variables as a result of the grounded theory approach is evidence that verifies, in part, the research results. That is not to say that the differences in the results of the projects yield the theories inconsistent.

The differences in category variables may be an effect of the researcher in relation to the organization. In developing grounded theory, the researcher brings with her/him to the field site specific personal characteristics. Similarly, the individual members of each organization have specific personal characteristics. The combinations of the relationships among both the observer and interviewer as individuals and the organization members are variables which are not accounted for in the resulting theory. The researcher's and organization members' personality, communication style and appearance contribute to the development of the research relationships and can influence the results of the study. Also, the relationships among the system members and their combined relationship with the researcher will affect the results. Therefore, the
differences in category variables can be attributed but not limited to these relationships and their exclusion from the research results.

In short, the similarities in category variables confirm that the two grounded theories are "consistent" and the differences suggest areas for additional research and testing. Through further testing only can the grounded theory gain much needed verification or dismissal. Before addressing future research, however, further discussion of the data followed by the limitations of the study is necessary as these issues influence suggestions for organizational communication investigations.

Data Imbalance

At the completion of coding the incidents into categories, the researcher suspected that an imbalance existed with respect to the number of interview and observation incidents coded into each category. Table 4.3 compares the final count of interview and observation incidents for each category. In every
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Observation % of Category Total</th>
<th>Interview % of Category Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expression of Humanistic Attitude</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>91.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal Group Delineation</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>87.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expression of Stress</td>
<td>29.6</td>
<td>70.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal Communication</td>
<td>89.4</td>
<td>10.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expression of Incompatibility</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>87.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expression of Change in Motivation</td>
<td>15.0</td>
<td>85.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoid Conflict</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>93.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resolve Conflict</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>88.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structural Ambiguity</td>
<td>10.4</td>
<td>89.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expression of Expectations/Perfectionism</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>80.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow Through on Task</td>
<td>95.7</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asking for Information/Assistance</td>
<td>95.8</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task Sharing</td>
<td>99.1</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task Specialization</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>90.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admit Mistakes</td>
<td>85.7</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.3 (continued)

| Expression of Professionalism/Dedication | 6.0 | 94.0 |
| Positive Feedback                        | 11.8 | 88.2 |
| Expression of Having Power               | 47.3 | 52.7 |
| Expression of Insecurity                 | 23.6 | 76.4 |
| Giving Explanations                      | 87.5 | 12.5 |
| Overseeing a Task                        | 81.1 | 18.9 |
| Flexibility                              | 14.7 | 85.3 |
category, with one exception, the category is dominated by either observation or interview incidents. There are several possible explanations for the discrepancy between what organization members were saying and what they were doing.

One explanation for the imbalance is the perceptions of the organization members. Although an individual perceives her/himself in one way, other organization members perceive that person quite differently. This perceptual conflict would be evidenced by the interview data—how the individual perceives her/himself expressed during an interview and how that individual is perceived by others as expressed in their interviews. The observation data would support any perceptual conflict—the reactions of organization members to the behavior of the individual as observed by the researcher.

On the other hand, the imbalance can be viewed as an indicator of an awareness on the part of organization members that they were being studied. That is, the organization members may have been communicating
in an unnatural manner for the benefit of the researcher. If that were the case, there would exist differences between the observation and interview data. For example, an individual might express in an interview particular behavior which that person feels would please the researcher; yet, that same individual may not be able to manifest that behavior on a daily basis, i.e., during observation periods.

The researcher, then, is presented with a form of bias—manipulation of the data by the subjects. Whether or not the organization members are aware of the discrepancy between what they are saying and what they are doing, illustrated by the relative incident content of the categories, cannot be determined without further investigation. Yet another explanation for the discrepancy of coded data lies in the labels used for the categories. Differences between the researcher labels for category variables and organization member labels would account for a portion of differences in the categorization of data. For example, what the researcher labeled as motivation might have been
labeled as stress by the organization member. In this sense, then, the category labels represent an interpretation by the researcher, especially for those categories with a greater number of observation incidents; yet, category labels with a greater number of interview incidents are closer representations of organization members' interpretations.

Finally, the categories' differences in incident content may be explained by referring to the categories as observation categories and interview categories. In other words, the contents of the categories may only be obtained through observation or interview. For example, task sharing data would be difficult to obtain during interviews unless questions pertaining specifically to that topic were asked; therefore, data about sharing tasks were obtained through observation. This insight provides a greater level of understanding about the variables within system—the nature of the categories, or variables, indicates the manner of manifestation of the communicative behavior of organization members.
From this discussion of the research results, the limitations of the study can be presented followed by implications for future research.

Limitations

There are at least four problem areas of the study: use of only one or two researchers, the functional definition of an incident, the linear nature of the relationships among categories, and the temporal nature of the study. Each of these problem areas is a separate limitation of the study.

The Research Team

Throughout the research process, the researcher implemented methods which were necessary for achieving as high a level of reliability in the results as possible. However, restricted by funding, time and available qualified research assistance, the researcher was limited to the use of only one research assistant. The researcher and her assistant each had separate and distinct responsibilities in the collection of data. Since the collection of interview data required less
time than the collection of observation data, and because the research assistant was not familiar with the role of an observer, the two research roles were separated with the primary researcher collecting solely observation data and the research assistant collecting solely interview data. De-briefing sessions were implemented to coordinate the activities of the research team as well as to maintain a common orientation in the collection of data.

To improve reliability, the roles of observer and interviewer could be combined. The problem with separate research roles lies in the interpretation of the communicative behavior as it occurs. To counteract the personal bias of the observer or interviewer is not an easy task, but must be attempted. One method for lessening the impact of personal bias is to combine the two research roles and employ a third party to coalesce the information before the coding process begins. The result, two researchers working in the field each collecting observation and interview data
and a third researcher reviewing and combining the data, would yield a higher level of reliability in the research results.

**Incident Definition**

During the data analysis, while separating the data into incidents, the researcher became more aware of the importance of the functional definition of an incident. The question of quantity of data arises when a broad definition of an incident is implemented. For example, in a similar study, Browning (1973) used 366 incidents for category coding compared to 838 incidents coded in this research. Both studies employed the same definition of an incident: "A complete thought or act of behavior performed by an individual or group of individuals as viewed by an observer or interviewer" (Browning, 1973, p. 38). Since both organizational research studies employed an identical functional definition and had the same research assumptions: that organization members communicate interpersonally and that there are variables which influence that interpersonal communication,
the differences in the data of the two studies warrant further discussion.

The initial response of the researcher was to assume that the difference between her results and those of Browning (1973) was based on the background of the two researchers. That is, two researchers with different personal and/or theoretical perspectives would interpret communicative behavior quite differently, resulting in quite different research results. However, upon closer inspection, the researcher concluded that this assumption was not an acceptable explanation for the significant difference in the quantity of data collected in the two studies.

The time length of the research study dictates, in part, the quantity of data collected. Although both studies conducted observation periods of approximately three hours in length, the duration of the collection of data phase may have differed between the two studies. Browning (1973), for instance, may have noticed repetition in his observation data within a shorter period of time, which would have brought that
phase to completion. Nonetheless, the division of the
data into incidents and background material is most
likely the stage responsible for the difference in
quantity of data between the two studies. That
difference can be attributed to the broad definition
of an incident. When the act begins and ends, when
the act is complete, is the decision of the researcher
and is left to the researcher's discretion. Each
researcher who employs this definition of an incident
in qualitative organizational communication research
must not be guided by the quantity of data, but rather
the quality of the data, as each situation may require
more or less data to support the theory.

Linear Relationships

The relationships among the categories are
stated as linear relationships. When developing the
hypotheses, the researcher was only investigating
positive or negative relationships.

By using only positive or negative relationships,
the theory ignores any curvilinear possibilities. For
example, hypotheses could have been developed which dealt with the degree of influence among categories—
at what point will the relationship change due to an increase or decrease in one of the categories? Will the same relationship exist among categories throughout all levels of change?

Dictating that the relationship maintain its positive or negative status is akin to pigeon-holing the relationships. That is, the theory has overlooked a dimension of the variable relationships by concentrating on the concept of solely increasing or decreasing and not their possible combinations. This limitation could be overcome by examining the possibility of curvilinear relationships during hypothesis generation.

**Seasonal Implications**

The data were collected in the late spring season of the year, from early-April through mid-May. Important implications surround the time of year in which the data were collected.
Seasonal influences must be considered as a limitation of the study. For instance, consider the implications had the investigation taken place during the months of November and December, a time of year when the retail business would be concerned with the highest volume of sales due to the Christmas holiday. Although some references were made to the difference in organizational atmosphere during the holiday season by interview respondents, a clear picture of the change that would occur is difficult to infer from the data.

A more longitudinal investigation of communication in the organization would yield a higher degree of accuracy as seasonal variations in the work flow would be included in the development of the theory. Peak seasons as well as slower times of the year need to be considered for data collection since communication behaviors can be affected by the amount of work the individuals must perform.

The research team, incident definition, the nature of the relationships and seasonal implications are important considerations for the researcher.
Recognizing these limitations can provide insight and guidance for future research in overcoming the limitations of qualitative research.

**Future Research**

The grounded theory presents numerous possibilities for future research in the study of organizational communication. The development of a theory grounded in the data sets the stage for additional study based on prior results.

One option for further research is to test the theory within the organization. Using organization members to code the data into the categories developed by the researcher would provide additional insight into the perceptions of the organization members. Implementing a data coding process of this nature would involve the organization personnel in the research and bring about a closer relationship between the research process and the everyday life of those involved in the study. The results, then, would have even greater significance to the subject organization. This method of analysis
might also aid in developing sensitivity on the part of organization members to communicative behavior. A comparison of the researcher's analysis with that of the organization's analysis would lead to a more in-depth characterization of the organization.

Where additional testing of the theory at the original research site is not feasible, a test could be made in another similar organization. Although this researcher employed similar research questions and methods to those of Browning (1973), the resulting grounded theory of each of the two studies is quite different. This difference can be largely attributed to the nature of the organization. While Browning (1973) studied a research and development organization, this researcher studied a retail organization. The function of the organization dictates, in part, the types of communication which occur at the workplace. Other factors such as organization structure, educational level of the organization members and age groups will also influence the communication behavior within the organization. Therefore, the grounded theory is most
appropriately tested in similar organizational situations. However, to identify its generalizability, the theory must be tested in other types of organizations.

Earlier in this chapter, the grounded theory was reviewed by examining the properties of fitness, understandability, generalizability and control. Through future research, these four properties of theory can be rigorously tested.

The fitness of the theory can be tested through, for example, survey research. Investigation of numerous organizations and identifying the same variables is one method of verifying the results. In the comparison of the Browning (1973) and Muto studies, some agreement was found; however, a more comprehensive testing must be conducted to insure reliability.

Understandability of the theory can only be tested by presenting the results to laypersons in the field. Since one of the objectives of developing grounded theory is its usefulness, which can only occur through understanding, it is not sufficient that
theorists understand the theory—it must be clear to those who will use it in practice. The accomplishment of this objective could be evaluated readily by again using the survey method—by asking organization members to respond to questions about the theory following a presentation.

For testing generalizability and control, laboratory methods could be implemented. Evaluation of the grounded theory could be made through the use of isolated situations or by isolating system elements. Through this method, the nature of the relationships could also be tested. The laboratory setting would serve well for determining any curvilinear relationships among the categories.

In summary, only through rigorous testing will the grounded theory gain necessary verification and further development. Many of the suggestions for future research involve the use of quantitative data and analysis. Through quantitative testing, qualitative research will be enhanced.
The Grounded Theory

Grounded theory can be used by researchers in a variety of situations. The researcher can utilize the grounded theory approach to study a specific organization, to gain a theoretical understanding of the organizational lives of organization members. A grounded theory can then function as a guideline, or starting point, for future research on organizational communication; i.e., testing the relationships among system variables. The grounded theory can also provide insights for the body of organizational theory development since the grounded theory is based on the actual daily occurrences within an organization.

Furthermore, the grounded theory approach reinforces the importance of qualitative research, of studying communicative behavior in its environment, in its context. And subsequently, grounded theory can provide for a synthesis of qualitative and quantitative research in future studies. The grounded theory must not be viewed as an end, but rather as a beginning, a point of departure for developing additional organizational communication theory.
ENDNOTES

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Appendix A

Sample Incidents

IV 46: "...each person is an individual and you've got to learn to use the strengths and weaknesses of the individual in order to get the most out of your workers."

OB 300: X gets Y started on a task. When she's finished explaining, Y asks a question. X says, "Let me check with Z to see how she wants it done." X comes back to Y and gives her more information about how the task is to be done.

IV 394: "...a lot of times people have problems and they keep it to themselves. They're nervous, they're uncomfortable, they're afraid to go to X... because she's the owner."

OB 221: B approaches each person to get them to sign a "going-away" card for C.

IV 343: "They have no pride and no respect in this store at all."

OB 47: A says to B, "I meant to call you and thank you for taking care of that job for me while I was away, even though you did it wrong and I got yelled at for it." B responds, "Tough [luck], picky-picky around here."

IV 33: "...sometimes people expect things of me that I don't think they have any right to expect of me."

OB 37: A says to X, "I sold a garnet today." X nods as A says, "I was proud of myself." X responds, "You should be," and continues talking about that being a good example of knowing your merchandise.

IV 297: "...I don't have to be worried about getting the respect of the other people around here."
ADDITIONAL READINGS


