

MONITORING COMMUNICATION BEHAVIOR
OF ORGANIZATIONAL EMPLOYEES AS A
PREDICTOR OF WORK SATISFACTION

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ABSTRACT

MONITORING COMMUNICATION BEHAVIOR OF ORGANIZATIONAL EMPLOYEES AS A PREDICTOR OF WORK SATISFACTION

By

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If one considers the rising rates of employee turnover and absenteeism as barometers of organizational problems, then it becomes important to analyze the antecedent phenomena of these conditions to determine their relationship to larger problems resultant in society. Communication phenomena provide a useful approach to analyzing these organizational problems.

Work satisfaction is a concept which has had a fairly consistent negative relationship with turnover and absenteeism. A leading advocate of work satisfaction theory is Frederick Herzberg, the originator of the Motivation-Hygiene Theory of Work Satisfaction. The present study sought to determine if there are certain communication behaviors which are manifest under the assumptions of the Motivation-Hygiene Theory. ✓



In August-September, 1969, 379 randomly selected non-supervisory employees with at least six months tenure completed a questionnaire about various communication and other behaviors. The study was conducted in the Operations

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Division of a commercial bank in the Eastern United States. Respondents were interviewed off-the-job, with the knowledge that their responses would be kept in confidence. The random sample was chosen by the researcher.

Employees were grouped into three nominal categories of work satisfaction, on the basis of open-end responses coded according the Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory. The three groups were (1) satisfied employees, (2) dissatisfied employees, and (3) "other" employees who gave mixed (or no) responses to the work satisfaction/dissatisfaction open-end questions.

Work satisfaction was defined as an employee's statement which acknowledges some aspect of his job as the most enjoyable aspect of his relationship with the organization. Dissatisfaction was defined as an employee's statement which acknowledges some factor not related to his job as the least enjoyable aspect of his relationship with the organization.

Hypotheses were tested which compared satisfied and dissatisfied employees with 11 communication behaviors, grouped into three categories of organizational communication functions--production, maintenance, and innovation. Of the 11 hypotheses, five were significant at the $p \leq .05$ level. The results can be summarized as follows:

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The production-function of communication included a significant relationship for Hypothesis Two. If employees are satisfied with their work, they believe they receive faster attention to their work problems from their supervisor.

While Hypothesis One--if employees are satisfied with their work, they will take a smaller number of work problems to their supervisor; Hypothesis Three--if employees are satisfied with their work, they are more likely to talk with their supervisor about whatever topic is most important at the time; and Hypothesis Four--if employees are satisfied with their work, they are more likely to talk with their two-step supervisor about whatever topic is most important at the time--failed to receive support, a consistently different set of behaviors were exhibited by dissatisfied employees in comparison to satisfied and "other" employees. Data were consistent with the hypothesized direction in each case.

The maintenance-function of communication yielded significant relationships for Hypotheses Five, Six, and Seven. If employees are satisfied with their work, they believe they receive faster attention to their personal problems from their supervisor; they believe their supervisor is more interested in both their work and personal problems; and they believe their two-step supervisor is more interested in both their work and personal problems.

Hypothesis Eight failed to receive support. While there is a slight tendency for work satisfied employees to shun group

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membership, a solid majority of the membership in every employee category does belong to some employee group.

The innovation-function of communication showed support for Hypothesis Nine. If employees are satisfied with their work, they believe they get information about organizational plans and policies which is more satisfactory to their needs. While Hypotheses Ten--if employees are satisfied with their work, they are more satisfied with responses to their inquiries for more information about the organization, and Hypotheses Eleven--if employees are satisfied with their work, they are less inclined to be thinking about ideas to change procedures or conditions in the organization--failed to receive support, different behaviors were observable for dissatisfied employees when compared with satisfied and "other" employees. This phenomena is consistent throughout the data.

These findings contribute evidence to a body of knowledge which seek to describe the characteristics of satisfied and dissatisfied employees. Numerous studies have provided evidence (Van Zelst, 1951; Wickert, 1951; Seashore, 1954) that satisfied employees tend to have less absenteeism and turnover. Propositions related to the communication behavior of dissatisfied employees should provide managers with more information to effectively monitor the dynamics of their organization.

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Further research is needed to specify more precise indicators of effective and efficient communication behavior which correlate with indices of employee satisfaction. While Herzberg's concepts of motivators and hygienes are useful perspectives to consider when defining the nature of organizational problems, this study's experience suggests that future work in organizational development will require a broader, more operationally precise theoretical base which makes more assumptions about the function of information and communication processes.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

This chapter establishes a focus for the study of communication behavior as an index of work satisfaction in formal organizations. The present study was part of a larger investigation which was conducted in a large commercial bank to monitor aspects of its management communication system. The long-range goals of the study involved the search for ways which might lead to improvement in the effectiveness and efficiency of the system. The short-range objective of the research study was to find ways in which improved communication policies and practices might lead to reductions in turnover.

One measure which has had a fairly consistent negative relationship with turnover is work satisfaction. A leading proponent of work satisfaction theory in industrial psychology is Frederick Herzberg; his theory of employee motivation (1959) has received much attention among organizational theorists and managers. This study seeks to determine if there are certain observable communication behaviors which are manifest under the assumptions of Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory.

Chapter One provides a description of some basic principles important to the analysis of communication, work

satisfaction, and to the theoretical interaction between the two concepts. Chapter Two specifies eleven hypotheses which predict differences in communication behavior between satisfied and dissatisfied employees. Chapter Three reports the results of the investigation. Chapter Four summarizes and analyzes the nature of the study.

Theoretical Aspects of Communication

(Communication is the process through which individuals regulate their relationship with the environment. Within a system, men must exchange information in order to adapt to the demands imposed on them by their environment.*) Weiner says, ". . . to live effectively is to live with adequate information. Thus communication and control belong to the essence of man's inner life even as they belong to his life in society (Weiner, 1955, p. 27)."

Weiner's position is based on the following assumptions:

Man is immersed in a world which he perceives through his sense organs. Information that he receives is coordinated through his brain and the nervous system until, after the process of storage, collation, and selection, it emerges through effector organs, generally his muscles. These in turn act on the external world, and also react to the central nervous system through receptor organs . . . and the information

*The term system is used in reference to general systems theory. Buckley (1968, p. 493) defines a system as ". . . a complex of elements or components directly or indirectly related in a causal network to some other in a more or less stable way at one time."

received . . . is combined with his already accumulated store of information to influence further action (p. 26).

To communicate information, i.e., to transfer patterns of matter-energy with symbolic referent (Berlo, 1969, p. I-3), is the most basic process inherent in human organizing. Communication enables individuals in organizations to express some dimension of the nature of their uncertainty, or to redefine a level of uncertainty, which they equate with personal satisfaction. Organizations themselves are social systems with specific purposes which have been established by men who group together in order to achieve their collective goals (Parsons, 1960, p. 17).

According to Berlo (1969, pp. IV-8, 9) ". . . there are three classes of uses that people make of communication: production, innovation, and maintenance of the social system in which communication occurs." He describes these functions as follows: ". . . getting a job done (productivity), exploring new behavioral alternatives (innovation), and keeping the system . . . and its components . . . functioning (maintenance)."

The production function of organizational communication should not be confused with the manufacture of physical objects only. Productivity refers to how communication is used to provide procedures which insure compliance with a predetermined position. This function is closely aligned to the prescribed rules and regulations of formal organizations. It involves the procedures by which new organizational

members are socialized to function efficiently in various organizational roles. Also, production communication is concerned with the on-going evaluation of performance to insure satisfactory output.

The maintenance function of organizational communication involves regulating procedures in a manner that contributes to permanence and regularity in the functioning of the system. It has three sub-categories: maintenance of self-concept, maintenance of interpersonal relationships with other components of the system, and maintenance of the production and innovation functions within the system.

The innovation function of organizational communication is concerned with the ". . . search for new ways of doing things, for new things to do (Berlo, 1969, p. IV-9)." Its objective is to allow for procedures which insure adaptation to new demands imposed by the environment.

The integration of these aforementioned functions has been well stated by Katz and Kahn (1966, pp. 223, 224):

Communication--the exchange of information and the transmission of meaning--is the very essence of a social system or an organization. The input of physical energy is dependent upon information about it, and the input of human energy is made possible through communicative acts. Similarly the transformation of energy (the accomplishment of work) depends upon communication between people in each organizational subsystem and upon communication between subsystems. The product exported carries meaning as it meets needs and wants, and its use is further influenced by the advertising or public relations material about it. The amount of support which an organization receives

from its social environment is also affected by the information which elite groups and wider publics have acquired about its goals, activities, and accomplishments.

An observable phenomena, communication messages can be important indicators of organizational function. In fact, analyses of communication networks may be a more reliable indicator of information and power locus in an organization than the formally imposed hierarchical structure of the organization. Knowledge of communication structure, through monitoring procedures, can provide managers with important information. Monitoring communication behavior would . . .

- . . . reveal the processual nature of the system.
- . . . specify areas of deterioration and corruption within the system.
- . . . increase the potential of rapid feedback to employees.
- . . . provide innovative information which would allow the maintenance of a dynamic, open system.

Formal Organizations

Schein (1965, p. 8) defines formal organizations as being ". . . the rational coordination of activities of a number of people for the achievement of some common, explicit purpose or goal, through division of labor and function through a hierarchy of responsibility." Examples of formal organizations are government agencies, commercial banks, hospitals, industrial corporations, and volunteer agencies.

To be characterized as "effective," organizations should be able to successfully achieve their predetermined

goals (Price, 1968). The question of whether or not an organization is effective is answerable largely as a function of the criteria specified by the demands of the environment. Thus, knowledge of effectiveness is dependent largely on the quality of information which an organization can collect about its own internal performance and its relation to the environment.

In the past three decades, social scientists have begun to turn their attention to the organization as a field of scholarly inquiry. There have been inquiries conducted in numerous organizations to develop comparable standards for output measures in a variety of settings. From these data have emerged relationships which indicate what types of events are dysfunctional to organizational effectiveness. For example, economists have developed cost curves which explain the relationship between productivity and profit. Also, industrial psychologists have been able to show a relationship between employee absenteeism and company morale.

What we as yet know little about in organizations is the dynamics involved in the relation of communication and information variables to performance. Reindl (1970) presents some interesting and challenging concepts in the developing field of information management, but the propositions which he posits still require further empirical test.

A construct which has recently received renewed interest in organizational theory is work satisfaction. In the following section, some important aspects of the concept will be discussed.

Work Satisfaction

When an individual joins a business organization he has opted to participate in a system; in effect he has entered what Schein calls, "a psychological contract:"

The notion of a psychological contract implies that the individual has a variety of expectations of the organization and that the organization has a variety of expectations of him. . . . Within defined areas a person may be willing to obey the dictates of some other person or some written directives or rules, and to curb his own inclinations, even if they are contrary to the dictates. . . . From the side of the worker, (the contract) is implemented through his perception that he can influence the organization or his own immediate situation sufficiently to insure that he will not be taken advantage of (Schein, 1965, p. 11).

Several organizational researchers (Allport, 1962; Katz and Kahn, 1966; Tannenbaum, 1968) have joined debate on the question of how much a worker actually contributes of himself to the work organization. While a person is admittedly hired to work a "full" day in the organization's expectation, there is some experimental data (Weick, 1969), and field data (Ford, 1969a), to support the notion that employees have significantly reduced their commitment to the organization while still working on the job.

The leading proponent of the work satisfaction concept is Frederick Herzberg, whose theory of motivation (1959) has created a large amount of interest among organizational theorists. Basing his theory on the proposition that men have internal drive states, Herzberg defines his concept of man's basic needs. The theory has two basic assumptions:

1. The factors producing job satisfaction are separate and distinct from those which lead to job dissatisfaction.

2. (a) The factors which lead to job satisfaction (the motivators) are achievement, recognition, work itself, responsibility and advancement. (b) The dissatisfiers, such as company policy and administration, supervision, interpersonal relations, working conditions, and salary, contribute very little job satisfaction.

Herzberg labels the factors which affect work dissatisfaction with a medical term, "hygiene," which refers to the prevention of health hazards. Among hygiene factors are numerous communication variables, e.g., superior-subordinate interaction, peer interaction, and the diffusion of information. According to Herzberg's theory, the symbolic quality of the hygiene term emphasizes the preventative qualities--as opposed to the curative properties--of the variables. His work in this area is known as the Motivation-Hygiene Theory.

The data supporting Herzberg's initial postulation of the Motivation-Hygiene Theory were drawn from a study of engineers and accountants. A summary of the original findings is given below:

- 1) When respondents reported feeling happy with their jobs, they most frequently described factors related to their tasks, to events that indicated to them that they were successful in the performance of their work, and to the possibility to professional growth.
- 2) Conversely, when feelings of unhappiness were reported, they were not associated with the job itself,

but with the conditions that surround doing the job. These events suggest to the individual that the context in which he performs his work is unfair or disorganized and as such represents to him an unhealthy psychological work environment (Herzberg, 1959, p. 113).

The evolution of the Motivation-Hygiene Theory can be traced to the work of Abraham Maslow (1943), and to the development of theorizing on personality need hierarchies. Maslow suggests that human motivation proceeds up a ladder of human need. He argues that a satisfied need is not a motivator and that people do their best only in situations which offer them more than just good pay and benefits. What people are searching for, Maslow believes, is a chance for growth and involvement. He refers to this striving as the tendency for "self actualization."

Another personality theorist who has produced material supportive of the Motivation-Hygiene Theory is Chris Argyris. The following statement summarizes a portion of his position on the relationship of individuals to formal organizations:

To the extent that individuals who are hired to become agents of organizations are predisposed toward maturity, they will want to express needs or predispositions related to the adult end of each specific development continuum. . . . If they are provided with jobs which permit them to be more active than passive; more independent than dependent; to have longer rather than shorter time perspectives; to occupy a higher position than their peers; to have control over their world; and to express many of their deeper, more important abilities. . . this means that healthy adults will tend to obtain optimum personality expression while at work (Argyris, 1957, p. 53).

An additional contribution to the Motivation-Hygiene Theory was made by Douglas McGregor (1960), a psychologist and management professor. McGregor placed the function of work satisfaction into a normative context when he asserted his "Theory X" and "Theory Y" positions. In "Theory X" organizations, managers view employees as lazy, capricious, highly dependent, and in need of constant supervision.

"Theory Y" makes the following assumptions about an organization:

1. Managers are responsible for organizing production. This would include the adequate treatment of employees in the interests of achieving their economic objectives.
2. Employees are not naturally passive to the needs of the organization. If they are, it is because of their previous experience in the same organizational environment.
3. Management has the responsibility to nurture the potential of human motivators.
4. The principle requirement of management is to organize matters so that people can meet and achieve their own goals by directing their own efforts toward organizational goals.

The classic research study on work satisfaction was directed by Elton Mayo (1933). The Hawthorne studies, in a Chicago assembly plant of Western Electric, brought to light the proposition that the relationship between workers and their supervisors has a stronger influence on performance than any manipulation of environmental conditions, and that informal networks in the work group act as potential stabilizers on the level of production.

The Hawthorne studies have often been criticized as being methodologically unsound, in part because they were

contaminated by an inability to control extraneous variables in their research design and in part because of their inability to consistently establish comparable control groups. Nevertheless, the Hawthorne studies provided data which were initially accepted to support the proposition that greater employee satisfaction was causally related to higher productivity rates.

Coch and French (1948) presented work groups at the Harwood Manufacturing Corporation with evidence that a change in job methods need not increase employee dissatisfaction. The corporation had frequently transferred employees to departments whose work involved highly seasonal labor demands. The production quotas of recently transferred employees was extremely low; their absenteeism and turnover rates were extremely high. Following experimental attempts to expand the dimensions of employee job involvement, the production quota, absenteeism and turnover trends were reversed.

Bavelas and Barrett (1951) conducted experiments on employee communication network structure to determine possible relationships between performance and satisfaction.* Bavelas found a positive relationship between an individual's centrality in the network and satisfaction. There was also a positive correlation between centrality and leadership status in the network. Networks in which there was a leader,

*It should be noted that these experiments were conducted in laboratory settings. Bavelas' findings have as yet not been validated in an organizational setting.

recognized by the highest centrality score, tended to perform tasks more efficiently than leaderless groups.

^ The relationship of work satisfaction to organizational productivity has been an area of recurring theoretic dispute. In studies among insurance company workers (Katz, 1950), railroad workers (Katz, 1951), and automotive workers (Seashore, 1954) no significant relationships were found to indicate that greater employee work satisfaction caused higher productivity. Similarly, there is evidence from field experiments (Morse, 1954; Morse and Reimer, 1956) that social environments which produce high levels of productivity do not necessarily produce higher levels of work satisfaction.

Exhaustive reviews of the studies examining the relationship between productivity and work satisfaction have been made by Brayfield and Crockett (1955), Kahn (1960), and Vroom (1964, 1969). Vroom summarizes the state of those investigations in the following paragraph:

Positive relationships have been reported in some investigations, no relationship has been reported in others, and negative relationships in still others. Vroom (1964) has summarized the results of 20 investigations reporting product-moment correlation coefficients between measures of employee attitudes or job satisfaction and criteria of effectiveness. The median correlation between these two variables was found to be 0.14, with a range of 0.86 to -0.31. No systematic difference was observed between the results using groups and using individuals as units of analysis (Vroom, 1969, p. 199).

Herzberg and his colleagues collected data relevant to

the Motivation-Hygiene Theory in a wide variety of settings-- among housekeeping workers; hospital employees; technicians and female assembly plant workers; scientists and engineers; organizational managers; county agricultural extension agents; women in high-level professional positions; Finnish supervisors and Hungarian engineers; and lower level supervisors in a utility industry. In each setting, support for the Motivation-Hygiene Theory was obtained.

While work satisfaction measures have not been found to be consistently correlated with measures of performance by other researchers, there is substantial evidence that work satisfaction is negatively related to turnover. Fleishman, Harris, and Brutt (1955), Giese and Rutter (1949), and Kerr, Koppelmeier, and Sullivan (1951) report a negative relationship between job satisfaction scores for individuals and the probability that these individuals would subsequently leave the organization.

Measures have also been found to testify to a fairly consistent negative relationship between work satisfaction and absence rates (Harding and Bottenberg, 1961; Metzner and Mann, 1953; Van Zelst and Kerr, 1953). These data lend support to a possible conclusion that work satisfaction is a reasonably good predictor of an individual employee's decision to remain in an organizational role.

Throughout the literature of employee work satisfaction there is recurring theoretical dispute concerning the operationalization of the construct. Herzberg (1959, 1966)

criticizes the validity of indices which measure work satisfaction on a five point attitudinal scale. Similarly, the reliability and exclusivity of the Motivation-Hygiene Theory has been criticized as being methodologically unsound.

House and Wigdor (1967) have objected to the critical-incident method of data collection used by Herzberg. The critical-incident refers to an interviewing technique which requires the respondent to relate his feelings, e.g., of "happiness" or "unhappiness," about a past event. The method relies on respondent recall. House and Wigdor believe this procedure biases Motivation-Hygiene data because it increases the probability that employees will take personal credit when things are going well, and it allows them to blame other people or other factors to explain their dissatisfaction.

In addition, the theory's critics maintain that the bivariate nature of the theory is not exhaustive. The categorizing of respondent data, by a content analysis technique, in ambiguous situations significantly reduces inter-coder reliability and limits the ability of other researchers to independently replicate Motivation-Hygiene studies.

Whitsett and Winslow (1967) reviewed 16 studies and concluded that the Motivation-Hygiene Theory is both a utilitarian and viable approach to the analysis of organizational problems. Most critics, they say, confuse overall satisfaction with the Motivation-Hygiene assumptions of work satisfaction and dissatisfaction. Whitsett and Winslow

believe the theory provides the following advantages: It has (a) resolving power . . . to bring in focus and to clearly identify the variables important in the problems to which it addresses itself; (b) it has explanatory power . . . to integrate the findings of past research into a more comprehensive framework; and (c) it has predictive power . . . to generate significant research questions and to provide managers with useful information about their own organizations.

Communication and Work Satisfaction

Among the tenets of the Motivation-Hygiene Theory there is an implicit assumption that communication behavior is satisfactory for satisfied employees and unsatisfactory for dissatisfied employees. As long as an employee is motivated to perform his tasks within the organization, communication with superiors and peers will present no difficulty to employees. Therefore those studies which have been previously conducted to test the assumptions of the Motivation-Hygiene Theory have neglected close scrutiny of communication dynamics.

The present study seeks to determine whether employees, categorized by a predictor variable of Motivation-Hygiene dimensions, exhibit different communication behaviors. Through specification of communication behavior as the criterion variable we hope to obtain information about satisfied and dissatisfied employees. We want to know what constitutes dissatisfied communication behavior. And we want

to know how unique the communication behavior of satisfied employees may be when they are compared with employees who report neither a high nor a low value for the work satisfaction variable.

Likert (1961) proposed a scheme of organizational management in which corporate productivity is a construct of numerous human by-products across many organizational strata. His data support the theory that communication, leadership style, and decision-making strategies tend to vary together in an organizational context. He refers to these variables as "predictor variables"--an analysis of their patterns will literally predict future changes in the level of organizational productivity.

Likert's theory is based on a systems analysis approach to the study of organizations. Katz and Kahn (1966, p. 28) explain the relationship of information and communication energy to the concept of open systems in the passage below:

Organizations as a special class of open systems have properties of their own, but they share other properties in common with all open systems. . . . Systems survive and maintain their characteristic internal order as long as they import more energy from the environment. . . . The feedback principle has to do with a special kind of information input. . . . Information enables the system to correct for its own malfunctioning or for changes in the environment, and thus to maintain a steady state or homeostasis.

The following figures show two important relationships of information and communication to the organizational system. Figure 1 depicts a model of information for decision-making

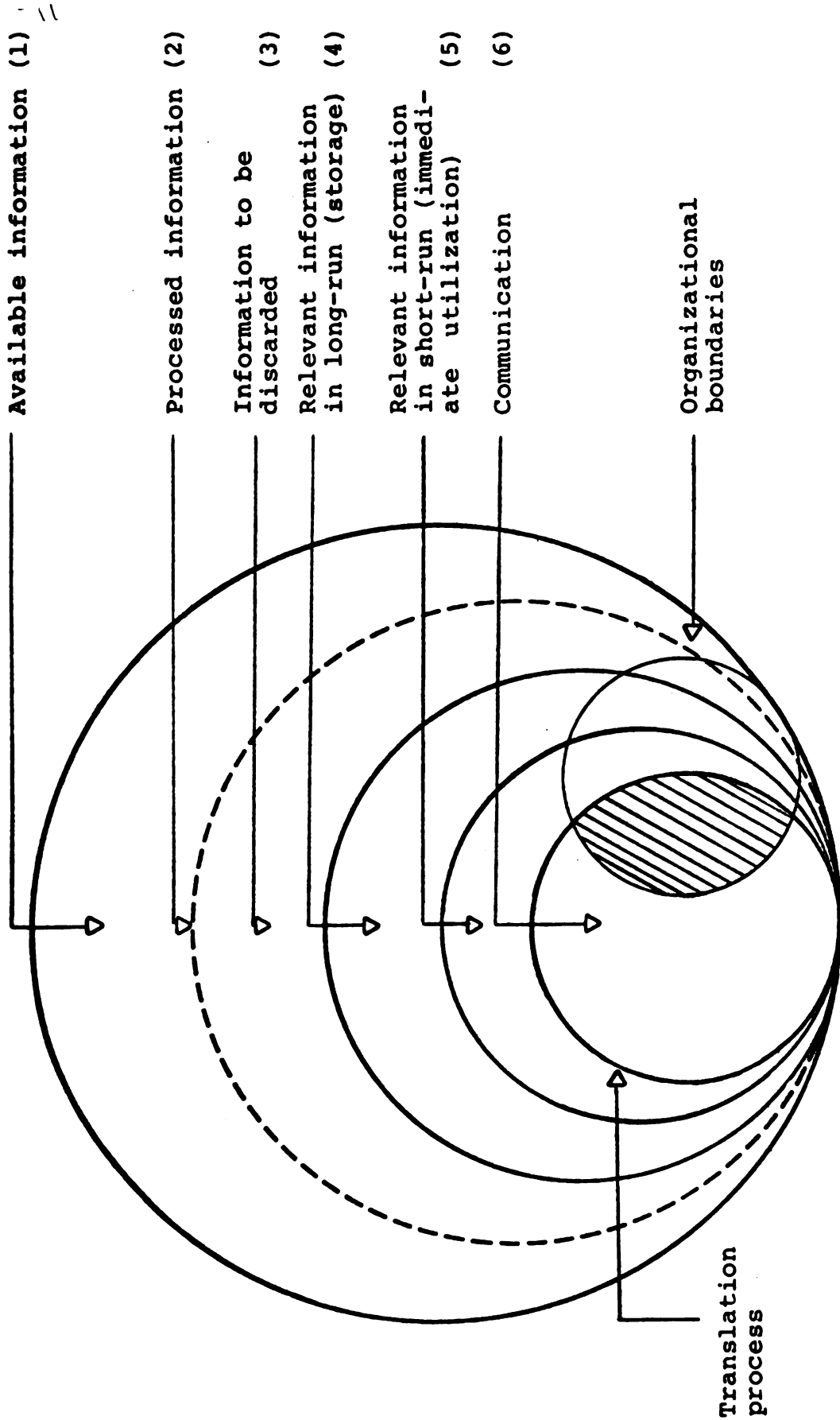


Figure I. Information for decision-making in organizations
Reindl (1970)

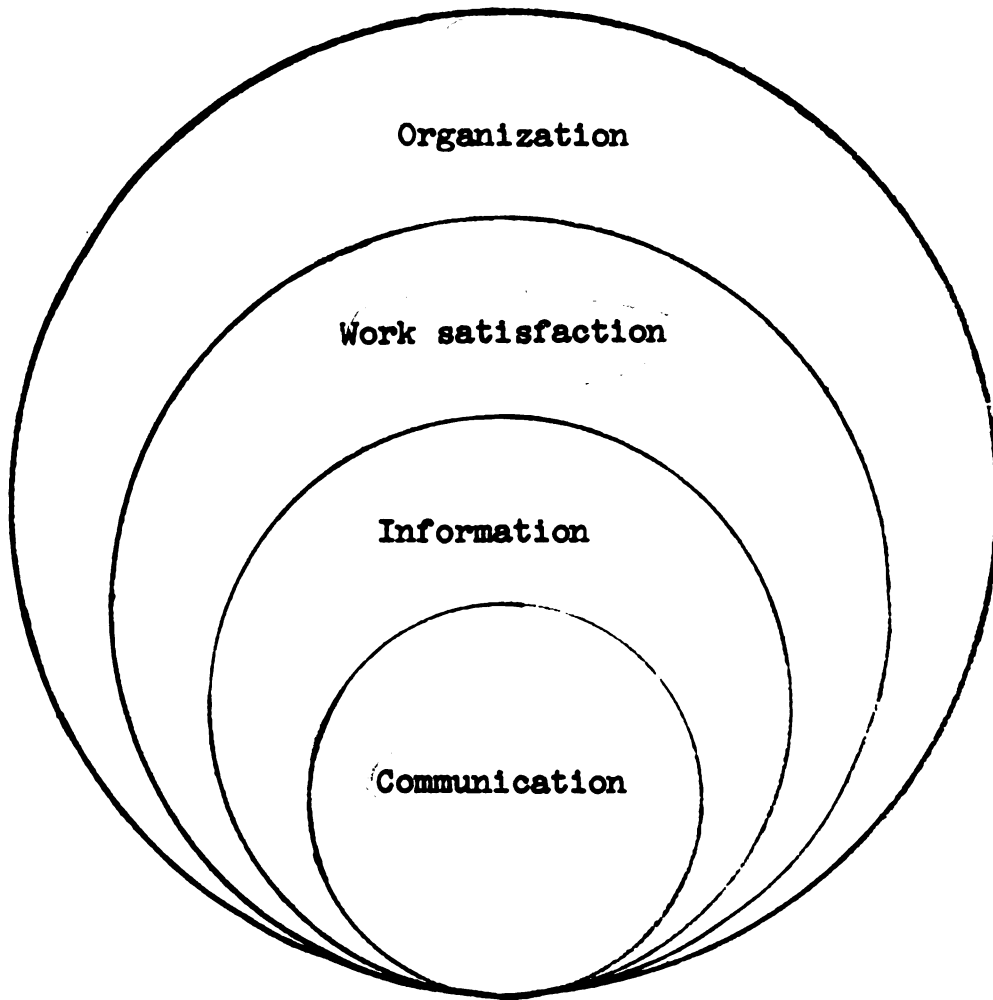


Figure 2. Relationship of communication and work satisfaction in organizations

in organizations. Figure 2 shows the relationship of information, communication, and work satisfaction to the organizational system.

The relationship of communication to organizations has obvious importance to the theoretical functions of an open system. The present study is concerned with the empirical investigation of communication in its relation to a major organizational theory of work satisfaction. If we can determine the operation of different communication behaviors under the Motivation-Hygiene Theory, then we have the basis to predict from observable communication data to other dimensions of organizational phenomena.

CHAPTER TWO

(RESEARCH PROCEDURES AND HYPOTHESES)

The study was conducted in the Operations Division of a commercial bank located in a major metropolitan center. Through empirical investigation of the Motivation-Hygiene Theory, answers were sought to the question--what type of communication behavior differentiates satisfied from dissatisfied employees? The short range objective of the study involved the search to find ways in which improved communication policies and practices might lead to reductions in turnover.

Research Procedures

Data for the study were collected in open-end interviews and from structured questionnaires administered to random samples of three groups in the organization's operations division.* The three employee groups were (1) supervisory personnel, (2) non-supervisory personnel with more than six months tenure, and (3) non-supervisory personnel with less than six months tenure. The present study utilizes

*The sample was drawn by the researchers from current company records. Respondents were interviewed off-the-job and were informed that their responses would be kept in the strictest confidence.

responses from the second category of employees (N = 379)--non-supervisory personnel with more than six months tenure.

During the interview, respondents were asked: "What do you like most about working for the bank?" and . . . "What do you like least about working for the bank?" These questions are similar to the initial probes used by Herzberg in data collection for the Motivation-Hygiene Theory. Using the critical-incident method, Herzberg asks employees to recount information about the happiest and the unhappiest days they've spent in the organization.

Responses to the two previous questions were coded into three nominal categories of work satisfaction. The predictor variable was thus composed of (1) satisfied employees, (2) dissatisfied employees, and (3) "other" employees who could not be classified as either satisfied or dissatisfied.

Work satisfaction is defined as an employee's statement which acknowledges some intrinsic aspect of his job as the most enjoyable aspect of his relationship with the organization. Dissatisfaction is an employee's statement which acknowledges some factor not related to his job as the least enjoyable aspect of his relationship with the organization.

Operationally, work satisfaction is defined in the present study according to criteria outlined by the Motivation-Hygiene Theory. Satisfied employees (21% of the sample) responded to the question, "What do you like most about working for the bank?" by citing some aspect of

(a) their job, or (b) their job monitoring procedures, or (c) the instruments they use in their job, or (d) the pressures involved in performing their job. In addition, they did not make any of the responses included under the dissatisfied category.

Dissatisfied employees (21% of the sample) responded to the question, "What do you like least about working for the bank?" by objecting to: (a) organizational policies (e.g., cafeteria or coffee break procedures), or (b) their work environment, or (c) their method of supervision, or (d) some aspect of discrimination directed toward them. They also did not give any of the work satisfied responses.

"Other" employees (58% of the sample) were constituted in two ways: (a) employees mentioned neither the work satisfied nor the dissatisfied topics, or (b) employees cited both the satisfied and the dissatisfied categories.*

Analysis of significant relationships was carried out using the χ^2 test with Yates correction for non-continuous data. Acceptance of the findings was set at the $p \leq .05$ level of significance.

Hypotheses

Berlo (1969, pp. IV-8, 9) describes three conceptually independent functions of communication in an organizational environment. They are production, i.e., ". . . getting a

*These respondents constituted less than 5% of the sample.

job done;" maintenance, i.e., ". . . keeping the system . . . and its components . . . functioning;" and innovation, i.e., ". . . exploring new behavioral alternatives.

In an organizational environment, communication and work satisfaction may share the theoretical relationships specified in the following sections.

Communication for Production

As part of the production-function of communication we observe the instructional flow of messages to increase organizational efficiency and to lower the cost of productivity. Communication for production is based, largely, on the assumption that information can be encoded and decoded with maximum effectiveness.

These hypotheses are made under the rationale that employees who express satisfaction with their work are more likely to encode messages for upward communication. They take work problems to their supervisor, or to his superior, only when they feel they need "expert" instruction. Work satisfied employees feel no compunction to avoid discussing work problems with their superiors and they feel more free to discuss a wide range of issues with them. And these employees, reciprocally, believe their supervisors maintain a more open relationship with them. Consequently, in comparison with employees who are dissatisfied with their work, we derive the following hypotheses:

- H1. If employees are satisfied with their work, they will take a smaller number of work problems to their supervisor.
- H2. If employees are satisfied with their work, they believe they receive faster attention to their work problems from their supervisor.
- H3. If employees are satisfied with their work, they are more likely to talk with their supervisor about whatever topic is most important at the time.*
- H4. If employees are satisfied with their work, they are more likely to talk with their two-step supervisor about whatever topic is most important at the time.**

Price (1968, p. 167) maintains the proposition that ". . . organizations which have a high degree of vertical communication are more likely to have a high degree of effectiveness than organizations which have a low degree of vertical communication." Vertical communication is defined as the transmission of information in the superior-subordinate relationship. Nevertheless, Katz, et. al. (1950) found data to support the proposition that too much supervision is negatively related to productivity.

*The wide range of topics for conversation in this hypothesis represents a mutual initiation of communication between an employee and his superior, as opposed to perceived unidirectional initiation of communication. Regardless of the specific content of the communication message, this situation expresses a relationship dimension of communication which is more open.

**In the hierarchical structure of the formal organization, a two-step supervisor refers to the person an employee's boss reports to. Similarly, that person has a boss; we refer to him as a three-step supervisor. The process could continue upwards until the organization's chief executive officer is encountered.

Communication for Maintenance

Maintenance communication in an organization is designed to support dynamic interaction and satisfaction among the members of the system. Maintenance communication is more concerned with interpersonal relationships than with task oriented problems in the organization (Berlo, 1969, p. IV-9).

The following hypotheses are formulated under the rationale that employees who are satisfied with their work have less friction in their interpersonal relationships than employees who are dissatisfied with their work. Interaction with superiors tends to be more personally oriented among work satisfied employees. Interaction with peers is more group oriented because there is greater cohesiveness among work satisfied employees. Therefore, in comparison with dissatisfied employees, we derive the following hypotheses:

- H5. If employees are satisfied with their work, they believe they receive faster attention to their personal problems from their supervisor.
- H6. If employees are satisfied with their work, they believe their supervisor is more interested in both their work and personal problems.
- H7. If employees are satisfied with their work, they believe their two-step supervisor is more interested in both their work and personal problems.
- H8. If employees are satisfied with their work, they are more likely to belong to a special group or "clique."

These hypotheses are based on consideration of a participative approach to management. The functional relationships suggested in these hypotheses have some support

from the work of Likert (1961, 1967), Katz, et. al. (1950, 1951, 1960), Morse (1953), and Seashore (1954). There is also a large amount of normative theorizing, which is essentially summarized by McGregor's "Theory Y," to justify formulation of the hypotheses.

Communication for Innovation

Innovation communication in an organization involves an employee's ability to construct messages which he believes can effect changes in the structure and/or functioning of the organizational system. According to Berlo (1969, p. IV-9), innovativeness involves the range of techniques one is capable of using to precipitate change.

The following hypotheses are made under the rationale that employees who are satisfied with their work will be more inclined to actively participate in the information networks of the organization than will dissatisfied employees:

- H9. If employees are satisfied with their work, they believe they get information about organizational plans and policies which is more satisfactory to their needs.
- H10. If employees are satisfied with their work, they are more satisfied with responses to their inquiries for more information about the organization.
- H11. If employees are satisfied with their work, they are less inclined to be thinking about ideas to change procedures or conditions in the organization.

Rogers (1970, Ch. 10) advances the proposition that
 ". . . the rate of innovation in an organizational structure is increased by the use of the participative approach."

Studies by Coch and French (1948), and Seashore and Bowers (1963) support the notion that successful adaptation to change in organizations is facilitated by employees who have more complete information about their organization's structure. Katz and Kahn (1966) report higher innovation abilities in organizations which have adopted the Scanlon Plan (see Lesieur, 1958) method of employee involvement in decision-making. Employees successfully using the Scanlon Plan approach have shown consistently higher data on various satisfaction indices.

CHAPTER THREE

FINDINGS

The study sought to determine whether employees, when categorized by Herzberg's Theory of Motivation-Hygiene as satisfied or dissatisfied, would exhibit different communication behaviors in an organizational context.

Production Hypotheses

Predictions were made that employees who were satisfied with their work would exhibit different communication behaviors than dissatisfied employees--specifically, that satisfied employees would take fewer work problems to their supervisor than dissatisfied employees; they would be able to talk more freely with their supervisor, and with his boss, about topics which arise more spontaneously. Also, satisfied employees should have more efficient relationships with their supervisor when they seek help for work problems.

Hypothesis One If employees are satisfied with their work, they will take a smaller number of work problems to their supervisor.

Question: Did you take any work problems to your supervisor yesterday?

<u>Responses</u>	<u>Employee Category</u>		<u>Other</u>
	<u>Satisfied</u>	<u>Dissatisfied</u>	
Took no problems	31%	42%	44%
Took a few	48	43	39
Took several	21	15	17

The relationship is not significant.

Hypothesis Two If employees are satisfied with their work, they believe they receive faster attention to their work problems from their supervisor.

Question: When you take a work problem to your supervisor for help, how long is it usually before he gets to your problem?

<u>Responses</u>	<u>Employee Category</u>		<u>Other</u>
	<u>Satisfied</u>	<u>Dissatisfied</u>	
A very short time	58%	38%	57%
Some delay	29	39	20
Too long	7	16	11
Haven't taken him a problem	6	7	12

The relationship is significant, $p \leq .01$, $\chi^2 = 19.24$, $df = 6$. Work satisfied employees are more likely to believe that their supervisor gives them rapid attention when they bring him a work problem. "Other" employees report similar views of their supervisor; the dissatisfied employees, however, are less likely to say that their supervisor gives them his attention in a very short time.

Hypothesis Three

If employees are satisfied with their work, they are more likely to talk with their supervisor about whatever topic is important at the time.

Question: When you talk with your supervisor, which of the following best describes what you talk about?

<u>Responses</u>	<u>Employee Category</u>		<u>Other</u>
	<u>Satisfied</u>	<u>Dissatisfied</u>	
My problems or his problems	21%	28%	21%
Whatever's most important at the time	77	62	69
Small talk	2	10	10

The relationship is not significant.

Hypothesis Four

If employees are satisfied with their work, they are more likely to talk with their two-step supervisor about whatever topic is most important at the time.

Question: When you talk with your supervisor's boss, which of the following best describes what you talk about?

<u>Responses</u>	<u>Employee Category</u>		<u>Other</u>
	<u>Satisfied</u>	<u>Dissatisfied</u>	
My problems or his problems	20%	27%	20%
Whatever's most important at the time	64	51	57
Small talk	16	22	23

The relationship is not significant.

Maintenance Hypotheses

Predictions were made that employees satisfied with their work would have more effective and open interpersonal relationships with their immediate supervisors, and with their two-step supervisors. These characteristics would be reflected in the interaction between employees and their supervisors.

Hypothesis Five If employees are satisfied with their work, they believe they receive faster attention to their personal problems from their supervisor.

Question: When you take a personal problem to your supervisor for help, how long is it usually before he gets to your problem?

<u>Responses</u>	<u>Employee Category</u>		
	<u>Satisfied</u>	<u>Dissatisfied</u>	<u>Other</u>
A very short time	54%	34%	48%
Some delay	17	31	14
Too long	1	8	4
Haven't taken him a problem	28	29	34

The relationship is significant, $p \leq .05$, $\chi^2 = 13.36$, $df = 6$. Work satisfied employees are more likely to believe that their supervisor gives them rapid attention when they bring him a personal problem. "Other" employees hold essentially similar views of their supervisor; dissatisfied employees, however, are less likely to say that their supervisor gives them his attention in a very short time.

Hypothesis Six If employees are satisfied with their work, they believe their supervisor is more interested in both their work and personal problems.

Question: In your own personal view how would you describe your immediate supervisor?

<u>Responses</u>	<u>Employee Category</u>		
	<u>Satisfied</u>	<u>Dissatisfied</u>	<u>Other</u>
Interested in both my work and my personal problems	59%	35%	58%
Interested in my work problems only	41	65	42

The relationship is significant, $p \leq .01$, $\chi^2 = 10.04$, $df = 2$. Work satisfied employees are more likely to believe

that their supervisor is a person who is more interested in both their work and personal problems. "Other" employees hold similar views of their supervisor; dissatisfied employees, however, are more likely to say that their supervisor is interested in only their work problems.

Hypothesis Seven If employees are satisfied with their work, they believe their two-step supervisor is more interested in both their work and personal problems.

Question: In your own personal view, how would you describe the person your immediate supervisor reports to?

<u>Responses</u>	<u>Employee Category</u>		
	<u>Satisfied</u>	<u>Dissatisfied</u>	<u>Other</u>
Interested in both my work and my personal problems	43%	23%	39%
Interested in my work problems only	30	47	43
No contact	27	30	18

The relationship is significant, $p \leq .05$, $\chi^2 = 11.37$, $df = 4$. Work satisfied employees are more likely to believe that their two-step supervisor is a person who is more interested in both their work and personal problems. "Other" employees tend to have more contact with their two-step supervisor and their attitude toward him is more evenly distributed. Dissatisfied employees, however, say their two-step supervisor is more likely to show greater interest in only their work problems.

Hypothesis Eight If employees are satisfied with their work, they are more likely to belong to a special group or "clique."

Question: Is there a special group you usually talk with at coffee break, lunch, or during slow periods in the work day?

<u>Responses</u>	<u>Employee Category</u>		<u>Other</u>
	<u>Satisfied</u>	<u>Dissatisfied</u>	
Group member	73%	83%	79%
Not a group member	27	17	21

The relationship is not significant.

Innovation Hypotheses

Predictions were made that satisfied employees would report obtaining more useful information from various organizational networks, in comparison with dissatisfied employees. Hence, satisfied employees would receive information more sufficient to their needs, and they would receive more satisfactory responses to their inquiries for additional information. It was also predicted that satisfied employees would have fewer ideas about changing the structure of functioning of the bank.

Hypothesis Nine If employees are satisfied with their work, they believe they get information about organizational plans and policies which is more satisfactory to their needs.

Question: How do you feel about the kind of information you get about Bank plans and policies and when you get it?

<u>Responses</u>	<u>Employee Category</u>		
	<u>Satisfied</u>	<u>Dissatisfied</u>	<u>Other</u>
I get the information I need at the time I need it	62%	42%	61%
I don't get the information I need at the time I need it	38	58	39

The relationship is significant, $p \leq .02$, $\chi^2 = 8.51$, $df = 2$. Work satisfied employees are more likely to believe that they receive information about organizational plans and policies which is satisfactory to their needs. "Other" employees report similar views; the dissatisfied employees, however, are less likely to say that they receive information which is sufficient to their needs.

Hypothesis Ten If employees are satisfied with their work, they are more satisfied with responses to their inquiries for more information about the organization.

Question: If the first person you try doesn't give you a good enough answer (for information about Bank plans and policies) where do you go next?

<u>Responses</u>	<u>Employee Category</u>		
	<u>Satisfied</u>	<u>Dissatisfied</u>	<u>Other</u>
Always get a good answer	32%	25%	38%
Go to other sources of information	58	58	46
Generally don't go anywhere	10	17	16

The relationship is not significant.

Hypothesis Eleven

If employees are satisfied with their work, they are less inclined to be thinking about ideas to change procedures or conditions in the organization.

Question: Have you ever had an idea that you thought might improve working conditions or procedures at the Bank?

<u>Responses</u>	<u>Employee Category</u>		<u>Other</u>
	<u>Satisfied</u>	<u>Dissatisfied</u>	
Had an idea	63%	76%	65%
Didn't have an idea	37	24	35

The relationship is not significant.

CHAPTER FOUR

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The main interests of the present investigation were to investigate some of the communication dynamics of Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory and, more specifically, to develop indices of communication behavior which would provide information to managers about the state of their organizational environment.

Results indicate that some clear dimensions of satisfied and dissatisfied employee communication behavior can be observed. Of the eleven hypotheses tested, five relationships were significant at the $p \leq .05$ level.

The production-function of communication included a significant relationship for Hypothesis Two. If employees are satisfied with their work, they believe they receive faster attention to their work problems from their supervisor. While Hypotheses One, Three, and Four failed to receive support, a consistently different set of behaviors were exhibited by dissatisfied employees in comparison to satisfied and "other" employees. Data were consistent with the hypothesized direction of difference in each case.

The maintenance-function of communication yielded significant relationships for Hypotheses Five, Six, and Seven. If employees are satisfied with their work, they believe they receive faster attention to their personal

problems from their supervisor; they believe their supervisor is more interested in both their work and personal problems; and they believe their two-step supervisor is more interested in both their work and personal problems. Hypothesis Eight failed to receive support. While there is a slight tendency for work satisfied employees to shun group membership, a solid majority of the membership in every employee category does belong to some employee group.

The innovation-function of communication showed support for Hypothesis Nine. If employees are satisfied with their work, they believe they get information about organizational plans and policies which is more satisfactory to their needs. While Hypotheses Ten and Eleven failed to receive support, different behaviors were observable for dissatisfied employees when compared with satisfied and "other" employees. This phenomena is consistent throughout the data.

One has the impression when analyzing the results that employee participation in vertical communication networks is a crucial variable facilitating satisfaction. To be consistent with the assumptions of the Motivation-Hygiene Theory, we would emphasize that the lack of participation in the vertical communication network is related to dissatisfaction. The fact that one participates in the vertical communication network, in itself, does not cause work satisfaction.

It should be noted that significant relationships involving the satisfaction variable were found in all three functions specified for communication--production, maintenance,

and innovation. Those hypotheses receiving the most consistent support were specified in the maintenance role. This information is consistent with the finding of Vroom (1964, 1969) and others who found various dimensions of employee satisfaction to be correlated with turnover and absenteeism measures.

More extensive analysis of empirical data is obviously needed to specify more precise indicators of effective and efficient communication behavior in formal organizations. The next phase of our work must deal with the explication of organizational communication constructs which will facilitate the study of both structure and function.

While Herzberg's concepts of motivators and hygienes are useful perspectives to consider when defining the nature of organizational problems, this study's experience suggests that future work in organizational development will require a broader, more operationally precise theoretical base which makes more assumptions about the function of information and communication processes. However, the present study has culled from Herzberg's bivariate approach to organizational phenomena some indicators of work satisfaction and dissatisfaction which are observable and potentially useful to consider in management decision-making.

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