



INFORMAL GROUP GENERATION AND  
BEHAVIOR IN PROFIT ORIENTED  
FOOD SERVICE OPERATIONS

Thesis for the Degree of M. S.  
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY  
Diane Vachout Stephens  
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## ABSTRACT

### INFORMAL GROUP GENERATION AND BEHAVIOR IN PROFIT ORIENTED FOOD SERVICE OPERATIONS

By

Diane Vachout Stephens

The presence and influence of informal organization(s) among workers have been acknowledged in the life of a variety of industries. Within the profit oriented segments of the food service industry, however, management has appeared to show little concern for or understanding of the current and potential influences of the informal organization(s) upon managerial processes.

In the fields of psychology and sociology considerable research concerning small group generation, structure, and behavioral process has been reported. The objectives of this very limited exploratory study were twofold: (a) to examine and attempt to identify the theoretical concepts of informal group generation and behavior developed by the behavioral scientists which might have relevance for studying the influence of informal organizations on the managerial processes of profit oriented food service operations and (b) to select and use the most pertinent of these concepts as a basis for assessing the sensitivity of a few managers of



profit oriented food service establishments in Michigan to the current and potential influences of workers' informal groups upon the managerial processes of their respective establishments.

For this investigation, a sample of eight profit oriented food service operations was selected from two public service types of well-patronized table service restaurants located within the Lansing-East Lansing area of Michigan. Data for the study were collected through on-premise interviews with management personnel. In all cases, the interviewees were persons with major responsibility for managing the meal service component of the facility. An interview guide was developed to assure collection of comparable information about the eight operations selected for study. Three types of data were sought: operational characteristics of the facility, basic employment policies, and opinions of interviewees concerning (a) the existence and role(s) of employee informal groups within their organizations and (b) the influence of these informal employee associations on the managerial processes of the operation.

Interview data were subjectively evaluated by the investigator to identify similarities and differences among facility characteristics, employment policies, and opinions of participants concerning the existence and role(s) of employee informal group associations within the operations surveyed. Within and between facility type comparisons were

made in an effort to evaluate the sensitivity of the survey participants to the current and potential influences of workers' informal groups upon the managerial processes of these profit oriented establishments.

Despite the limited scope of this exploratory study there is reasonable evidence that the theoretical concepts of informal group generation, structure, and behavior developed by the behavioral scientists can be meaningfully applied to the study of workers' informal organizations in profit oriented food service operations. Related investigations with larger survey samples are needed to gain more definitive data. Suggestions for areas in need of further study within the same conceptual framework are presented.

INFORMAL GROUP GENERATION AND BEHAVIOR IN  
PROFIT ORIENTED FOOD SERVICE OPERATIONS

By

Diane Vachout Stephens

A PROBLEM

Submitted to  
Michigan State University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

Department of Institution Administration

1969

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The author wishes to express sincere gratitude to Dr. Grace A. Miller for her invaluable assistance, encouragement, and patience throughout the long duration of this investigation.

Appreciation is indicated for the time and cooperation granted to the investigator by the survey participants.

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## INTRODUCTION

The operation of any business is by nature a group activity, the success of which is dependent upon and in large measure controlled by the attitudes, activities, and relative influences of two basic subgroups: (a) persons charged with the responsibilities of leadership and control within the business and (b) persons employed to perform the routine production and service tasks necessary to the functioning of the enterprise. Coexistent within the operational structure are two distinct systems of organization: (a) the formal organization: the system of consciously coordinated activities of two or more persons and (b) the informal group(s) or organization(s): the network of personal and social relations which are not defined or prescribed by the formal organization (28).

According to Davis (10), every formal organization has one or more informal organizations and the informal organization(s) cannot be abolished or reduced to surrender. Davis (9) believes that both formal and informal organizational systems are necessary for group activity.

Formal organizations are impersonal, composed of members who bear ideal relationships with each other, and are usually parts of larger cooperative systems (28).

According to Brown (4), informal organizations among workers exist permanently because they arise naturally and spontaneously from the 'face to face' interaction of people.

Behavioral scientists term the formal organization a 'secondary' group and the informal organization a 'primary' group (4, 30).

The presence and influence of informal organizations among workers have been acknowledged in the life of a variety of industries and described in the texts of some instructional materials (7, 8, 9, 28). However, little research has been reported in the area of informal groups within the food service industry per se. Further search of the literature in the area of food service management has revealed that in the profit oriented segments of the industry management has appeared to show little concern for or understanding of the current and potential influences of informal organizations upon managerial processes.

In the fields of psychology and sociology considerable research concerning small group generation, structure, and behavioral process has been reported. Within these disciplines researchers have agreed to the synonymity of the terms primary group and informal organization as defined above.

The objectives of this very limited exploratory study were twofold: (a) to examine and attempt to identify the theoretical concepts of informal group generation and behavior developed by the behavioral scientists which might



have relevance for studying the influence of informal organizations on the managerial processes of profit oriented food service operations and (b) to select and use the most pertinent of these concepts as a basis for assessing the sensitivity of a few managers of profit oriented food service establishments in Michigan to the current and potential influences of workers' informal groups upon the managerial processes of their respective establishments.

The concepts of group generation and behavior selected as a base for this study of workers' informal organizations in profit oriented food service operations are identified and described in the first major section of this report. The second section details the survey procedures used to sample a very limited number of food service operators relative to their opinions concerning the current and potential influences of their workers' informal groups on the management of their respective business operations. In the remaining sections the survey findings are summarized and discussed, conclusions are drawn, and suggestions for further exploration of the relationships between formal and informal organizational systems of profit oriented food service operations are given.

## CONCEPTS OF GROUP GENERATION AND BEHAVIOR

Behavioral scientists generally agree that there are many principles involved in the formation of group associations and the development of group behaviors. However, these scientists also believe that the interdependence of and the interrelationships between human needs and the social factors and forces inherent in the environment are the essential determinants of the nature of group associations and their resultant behaviors.

The principles of group generation and behavior described in this section of the report are derived from the work of the behavioral scientists and are intentionally limited to those concepts which, in the judgment of the author, may be fundamental to understanding the nature and influence of workers' informal organizations within the profit oriented segments of the food service industry.

### Group Generation

For purposes of discussion, information related to the formation and characteristics of informal groups has been divided into three parts: the satisfaction of individual needs or the primary motivating force for group generation, secondary bases for informal group generation, and

some possible types of informal organizations which may exist within the organizational structure of a business enterprise.

### Satisfaction of individual needs

Each individual has needs which he either consciously or unconsciously seeks to satisfy. Sutermeister (35), writing from the work of Maslow (27), classifies human needs into three categories: physiological, social and egoistic. The physiological needs are basic drives such as hunger, thirst, exhaustion and the need for personal safety. Social needs reflect a desire for love, affection, affiliation and belonging. Needs for recognition, knowledge, status, achievement, self-respect, and the respect of other persons are defined as egoistic needs.

There is a hierarchical order of appearance for the three types of individual needs. The physiological needs are the first to demand satisfaction, followed by the social needs, and finally the egoistic needs. Once any need is even partially fulfilled, the next higher need becomes the predominant motivator of an individual's behavior.

In American today, a person who has a steady job is likely to have satisfied his needs for food and shelter. Thus, the physiological needs no longer serve as prime motivators of behavior. It is at this time that the social needs and perhaps the egoistic needs become increasingly

important. These social and egoistic needs can be satisfied only through association with other individuals (12).

Membership in an informal organization within the work environment can provide satisfaction of social needs, for the person belongs to a definite group and is liked by the other members. An informal group can also give recognition, status, and respect to a fellow employee for his knowledge, achievement, and competence in a specific field. In this manner an individual is granted some degree of egoistic need satisfaction.

Research findings reported by Friedman and Havinghurst (15) and Schachter (32) provide support for the theory of social and egoistic need fulfillment. Friedman and Havinghurst have shown that employees do recognize the importance of association with other people within their work environment. Schachter discovered that if an individual becomes anxious or fearful in a situation his social need for affiliation increases.

Despite the evidence that membership in an informal organization can satisfy an individual's social and egoistic needs, the opposite may also be true. Group members can prohibit individual need fulfillment if, in actuality, they do not fully accept an individual. Also, it is possible for a person to have needs which demand too much from the other individuals in the group and the members are unwilling to give enough of themselves to satisfy this person's needs (5).

### Secondary bases for informal group generation

Although it is generally acknowledged that the primary motivational force underlying informal group association is the desire to satisfy the social and egoistic needs of individuals, there are a variety of other personal and environmental factors which also influence the nature and membership of informal groups. The personal factors which influence group generation, as expressed by some authors (28, 40, 41), are similarities of age, education, sex, marital status, race, religion, and ethnic origin. The physical proximity of people within their work environment will either enhance or restrict the rate of interaction possible between them (33, 41). According to Homans (19), the higher the frequency rate of interaction the greater the similarity among individuals will become. Persons performing like jobs tend to be more highly integrated than do persons with diverse activities (4). Such persons would share a common interest in and knowledge of the job and either possess or aspire to a similar degree of proficiency.

The personal and environmental similarities mentioned above are essential catalysts for informal group generation. These factors partially determine the general membership characteristics of the group formed.

### Types of informal organizations

There are three types of informal organizations identified as friendship-kinship, cliques, and subcliques.



The friendship-kinship type consists of only two or three persons who have a very close personal relationship (28). Cliques are composed of more than three individuals who commonly interact and mutually accept one another as group members (9). Cliques are further divided by Schein (33) into horizontal, vertical, and mixed types. Using the work place as an example, members of a horizontal clique are all from one location and similar employment standing. Persons from one location but different work levels constitute a vertical clique. The mixed clique is made up of a cross section of people from both diverse work locations and different employment levels. It is highly probable that more than one clique will exist within an organization and, when a member of one clique forms personal ties with members of another clique, the resulting informal organization is termed a subclique.

#### Group Structure and Behavioral Processes

Inherent in the formation and continuance of every informal organization there is a pattern of social positions occupied by the members. The manner in which such a group of persons elects to function together constitutes that group's behavioral process (20). Both the structural development and the modus operandi of the group are greatly affected by and significantly dependent upon the relationships between the existing social positions of the members and the group's behavioral process. Within each of these

elements there are a variety of associated factors which singularly or collectively may influence the character of the group formed as well as its behavioral process. In the discussion which follows the more dominant factors have been identified. For clarity of presentation, the factors related to group structure are given first followed by the factors concerned with behavioral process.

#### Derivation of structure

The structural patterns arising within an informal organization begin with the extent of homogeneity or heterogeneity of the membership. The term homogeneity is used to express the degree to which individual group members have common characteristics (3). Since no two persons are identical, the term heterogeneity refers to the characteristic differences which exist among group members. Heterogeneity among individuals in a group causes role differentiation and role conflict. In turn, role differentiation brings about the evolution of group leadership.

Role differentiation. A role is defined as the social position which an individual occupies during his interaction with others (9). Hare (16) presents the thesis that the group shares a set of expectations concerning the behavior associated with each position. Members of a formal organization are told what their expected roles are to be while persons belonging to an informal organization learn what type of behavior is desired through experience and

social interaction with companions. Each individual also discovers that some forms of behavior and the accompanying roles are definitely not acceptable. It is a person's understanding of his role in relation to the remainder of the group that aids the individual in determining his responsibility to the group (2).

Possible roles for members of a group have been classified into three categories: task roles, group building and maintenance roles, and individual roles. Task roles are those which assist the group in the definition and solution of a common problem related to a given task by coordinating and facilitating members' actions (2). Likert (26) terms some plausible task roles as those of initiating-contributing, information or opinion seeking, coordinating ideas or activities, evaluating progress, and recording. It is probable that not all of these task roles would be necessary to develop every group action contemplated by an informal organization. The essential task roles for a given problem situation are determined by the nature of the problem under consideration.

Building and maintenance roles are aimed at perpetuating, strengthening, regulating, and maintaining the group as a distinct entity (41). The types of roles associated with the growth and perpetuation of the group include harmonizing, compromising, setting standards or ideals, observing, and following (26). Such roles pertain to the social and emotional climate of the group.

Individual roles are assumed by a person to satisfy his social or egoistic needs and not the requirements of the group (41). Aggression, domination, recognition seeking, and blocking are types of individual roles which have little effect on the cumulative group behavior.

Role conflict. The informal organization is composed of individuals who are a part of a larger or formal organization. The formal organization as well as the informal organization has a distinct set of expectations regarding an individual's role. Should the role requirements of these two groups differ greatly, a mental state of role conflict exists for a person. The most striking case of role conflict occurs when both the formal and the informal organizations demand total loyalty. In most instances, the individual will attempt to harmonize his behavior to fit the desires of both groups and thus alleviate the discrepancy. The alternative is for the person to select the group which is most attractive to him, pursue the role required by that group, and remain in the conflict situation (9). In most cases, the two roles can be adjusted to fit either group's wishes but in the event that the influence of the two organizations overlaps greatly, conflict is the natural result (22).

Internal leadership. Every group, whether informal or formal in nature, has some type of leadership. Within the informal organization, through the process of role

differentiation, the group creates its own leaders (19). The structure of the group is not static but dynamic and changing with the demands of the group. Thus, leadership is not a trait which is possessed by an individual but is dependent upon the situation and the group (4). The individual who is granted a position of informal leader is, therefore, the person best suited to handle a specific situation and conforms most closely to the leadership role expected by the group (19).

There may be more than one leader at any one time within an informal organization. According to Davis (9), skill, age, seniority, and freedom of movement are all possible causes for leadership selection in the work environment. The highly skilled individual may serve as the group's leader when the situation requires his knowledge of the task; the man with seniority can offer his experience with wages; the mobile worker can give the group information about the activities taking place in other locations.

According to Schein (33), there are two major types of leaders which are distinguishable in the informal organization: the task leader and the socio-emotional leader. The task leader assists the group in satisfying its job related functions while the socio-emotional leader helps individual members satisfy the social and egoistic needs for which they sought group membership, and help solve their personal problems. Usually the positions of task and of socio-emotional leader are occupied by different persons.



The socio-emotional leader, though well liked by group members, is not considered capable of contributing adequate ideas or assistance to the group's task functions nor is the task leader able to be of aid to the group's psychological welfare (18).

#### Behavioral process elements

Once the structure of an informal organization is generated the group begins to behave as a united whole rather than as a conglomerate of individuals. The nature of the group behavior which evolves depends in large measure upon the interrelatedness of four important elements: the basic functions of the informal organization, the force emanated by cohesion within the group, the locomotion of the group and the size of the group.

Functions of the informal organization. The established informal organization has four basic functions: the perpetuation of cultural values, the provision of social satisfaction, communication, and social control. Each of these functions manifests specific types of behavioral phenomena, yet no one function exists without the influence of the remaining three.

Every informal organization has a characteristic set of cultural values which are passed on from member to member. These are the perpetual or constant values which keep the group united despite the entrance of new members and the exit of old members. Thus, each individual must learn the

values held by his group and adhere to them to maintain membership. Work methods, customs, an occupational language, ceremonies and rituals, and myths or beliefs are all forms of cultural values for the employee (28).

Occupational languages may take the form of a jargon or technical language, or an argot. Among highly skilled workers, a jargon consists of words which are not a part of the layman's vocabulary. The jargon is specific to an occupation and the objects used within that field of work whereas the occupational argot is developed by the use of substitutes for words in daily communication (4, 28). According to Miller and Form (28), the argot, by abbreviating a long phrase, may serve a semi-technical function. No matter what the occupational language form is, a technical jargon or an argot, the form serves the social function of identifying the group members and setting them apart from persons associated with other informal organizations.

Within the work group, ceremonies and rituals have little technical orientation but are merely ways in which the ideas and beliefs of the group are passed on to the membership. Initiation rites, manifested through teasing, requests for favors and the running of errands, can be ways that the group demonstrates to the new member that he is a novice to the job and has much to learn (28). These tests determine an individual's resourcefulness and potential contribution to the group. Rites of passage are ceremonies used when a member must leave the group. Such ceremonies

may take any form from joking or a farewell handshake to a planned celebration. In any case, the action is meant to recognize the separation of the member. Rituals which display the unity of the group are termed rites of intensification (4). Activities such as private jokes, a like article of clothing worn by all, group dining, or group recreation outside the work place occur between rites of initiation and passage. Rites of intensification not only solidify the group but also reaffirm membership for all participants.

Certain myths and beliefs are created about the work situation to preserve group values, provide a reason for the social system, and maintain morale. An example of these factors at work in a group of employees who consider skill to be very important and find that the formal organization is attempting to delimit that skill in some manner, would be a tale of a mythical man of great skill and ability. This story tends to fortify group morale and action (28). Brown (4) claims that beliefs and myths are primarily incorrect but remain unchanged when corrections are known. They are influential to group action, form a conceptual whole of which no part can be changed, and are partly determined by the social climate of the group.

The second function of the informal organization is to provide social satisfaction for the membership. As previously noted, the very basic reason for group generation is the necessity for satisfying individual social and egoistic needs. Through affiliation with others, a person receives

recognition, status, and increased opportunities for further interaction (9).

Communication is the third function of the informal organization. Through the development of systems and channels of communication, group members are kept informed of events occurring among themselves and within their environment (9). Some degree of horizontal communication is essential for cooperative group action and support of individual members (21, 24). The ease with which communication takes place helps to determine the emotional climate of the informal organization. The pivotal influence of qualitative and quantitative communications on informal group behavior is frequently underestimated.

The basic communication process involves six parts: (a) sender, (b) encoding, (c) transmission, (d) decoding, (e) receiver, and (f) feedback. These parts and their ordered rotation are schematically illustrated in Figure 1.

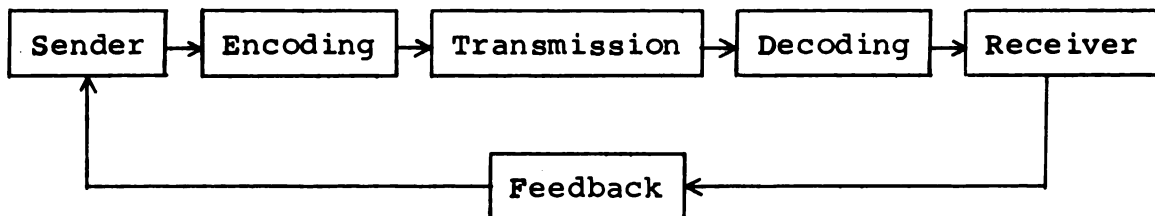


Figure 1. The basic communication process.

The sender must put the message into some form of code which he believes the receiver will understand. Language is most commonly selected, although actions or symbolic gestures are possibilities. Once the code form is chosen, the media of transmission must be decided. Among members of an informal organization the customary communication code form is language and the transmission medium is more likely to be oral than written.

Once the message has been expressed by the sender to the intended receiver, the decoding process must take place. The higher the degree of experience and awareness which the sender and receiver have in common, the greater are the chances that the message will be decoded and understood by the receiver as intended by the sender (31). Thus, similarities between the two parties increase the effectiveness of communications (37).

Without some form of feedback from receiver to sender, the communication circuit is incomplete. Only through feedback can the sender learn the accuracy with which his message has been received and understood. A two-way communication process which includes transmission and feedback allows the sender to adjust further behavior to meet the demand of the situation. The transmissive accuracy of the message conveyed and the confidence level established between the parties are usually greater in a two-way communication system than in a one-way process without feedback (23, 25).

Three common types of behavior are displayed by the members of an informal organization: technical, social, and socio-technical. Technical behavior is purely task related requiring no verbal interaction; behavior which does not relate in anyway to the actions of the formal organization is termed social. Socio-technical behavior demands some degree of communication which is related to the task at hand (28). Although technical and socio-technical behaviors do take place among members of an informal organization, social behavior is by far the type which occurs most frequently.

The social relationships among individuals give rise to a form of communication called rumor while the internal communication system of the informal organization is termed the grapevine. The grapevine, like its source the informal organization, cannot be abolished. Davis (9) believes that the nature and effectiveness of the grapevine is dependent upon the situation at hand. It is most active when the information to be spread concerns friends, is known to be of interest to others, or is current or new (28). The staler or older news becomes, the less likely it will be a subject for this communication channel (38).

Utilizing primarily an oral transmission medium, the grapevine is flexible and, more often than not, information is distorted as it is transferred from person to person. Initially, news spreads rapidly among a few group members, yet not every person forwards the information to someone else. The normal communication pattern for the grapevine

is the cluster chain where information is usually forwarded to members of the group by only a few individuals (9). As schematically illustrated in Figure 2, information forwarded to persons B, C, and D by person A reached persons E and F only because of person D. Person G received the information only because of the forwarding efforts of person F.

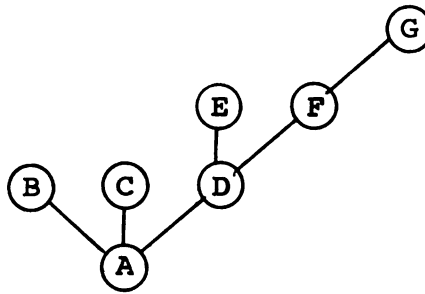


Figure 2. Informal grapevine communication pattern.

The phenomenon of rumor stems from the grapevine. Allport and Postman (1), in writing about the basic psychology of rumor, state that rumors serve to explain and reduce emotional tensions felt by individuals when accurate news is unknown and incomplete information is all that is available. A rumor, as it spreads, undergoes the process of leveling, sharpening, and assimilation. Leveling refers to the shortening of the content or reduction in the number of details included in the rumor as it passes between individuals. The selective perception of the contents of a rumor by an individual, which affects his retention and

reporting of the rumor, constitutes sharpening. As a person hears a rumor, he assimilates parts of the subject matter according to his personal attitudes and interests and, thus, through the process of assimilation, an individual tends to complete or alter portions of the rumor as he sees fit.

Rumors are usually considered by management as the negative contribution of the grapevine. Generally, rumors carry incorrect information which can damage the formal organization if not controlled or counteracted. Nevertheless, no matter how important or trivial a rumor is, it does carry a message permeated with the attitudes of the persons involved.

Ideally, the most effective way to prevent rumors is to keep all channels of communication open, thereby allowing accurate and total information to reach the informal organization (17). However, this high degree of openness is not always possible. Once a rumor has begun, it should be quickly and effectively dealt with by getting to the cause. An active rumor cannot be stopped in midstream, but it can be forced to dwindle into oblivion through the release of accurate and complete information. When this action has been taken, the need to pass false information no longer exists (9).

The fourth function of the informal organization is that of social control. Psychologists and sociologists seem to agree that the informal organization, through its very presence, exerts some degree of social control both



externally upon the behavior of those individuals who, although not members of the same group, are in contact with the informal organization and internally upon the behavior of the membership (9, 16, 28).

External control can best be exemplified by the influence exerted upon the formal organization through a particular action taken by the informal organization. The exact effect of such action depends upon the situation and the nature of the action.

Internal control occurs through the formation of group norms. Norms are merely standards of behavior the group expects of its members in different circumstances. In some ways norms are related to role differentiation, but the term norms refers to specific actions rather than to generalized behavior. For a norm to be effective it must have the approval of all group members. Once there is group consensus, norms serve not only to guide individual behavior, but to aid a group to gain definitive identity (30).

A group expects all members to conform to the established norms. An individual's actual compliance with the norms of the group depends upon his attraction to the group or the personal importance of his membership and the degree of attractiveness he perceives the remaining members feel for him (11). Tannenbaum (36) presents the concept that the more attracted an individual is to the group, the greater the chance that he will conform to group norms. The more

closely knit the group is, the greater the possibility of strong rejection of a non-conforming member.

There are four choices available to the individual who differs from the group norms: to conform, to change the norms, to remain a deviant, or to leave the group (16). In the majority of cases, a person will conform because of his attraction to the group. To change the norms requires a high level of communication and the achievement of group consensus is uncommon when only one person differs from the remaining members. Should a person elect to remain a deviant, he faces either temporary or permanent rejection by the informal organization. If the differences between an individual and the group are minor, he may not choose to leave the group. Major differences which are not reconcilable usually cause the person to seek a group which better suits his needs and normative ideas.

Communication plays an important role in the establishment of conformity among members of the informal organization. Through communication, the norms which are initially derived represent the consensus of the membership. Moreover, a group requires not only behavioral conformity, but also conformity of attitudes, opinions, and beliefs (5). Festinger and co-workers (13) have shown that the rate of communication changes with varying degrees of pressure toward uniformity within the group. When opinions held by group members differ, communication increases to those individuals holding the most extreme views. As pressure for a

uniform group and the communication rate increase, the actual change toward the desired conformity also increases.

Cohesion within the informal organization. The established informal organization is a cohesive group. All the factors of group generation and behavior are related to this concept. Festinger et al.<sup>1</sup> define cohesiveness as ". . . the total field of forces which act on members to remain in the group." For example, the degree of cohesion existing among group members can be increased when the personal characteristics and job assignments of the members are similar. Proximity of group members enhances the opportunity for interaction and thus, promotes cohesiveness among these persons. Conversely, workers distant one from the other in characteristics, location, and tasks display little, if any, cohesiveness (39).

Mills (29) presents the thesis that cohesion results from an emotional state of common attachment to the group and an affection for each member which is shared by the entire group membership. When the informal organization no longer satisfies the personal needs of its members to the degree that it once did, cohesion among the members decreases (6). Likewise, as cohesion lessens, the conformity

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<sup>1</sup>Leon Festinger, Stanley Schachter, and Kurt Back, Social Pressures in Informal Groups: A Study of Human Factors in Housing (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1950), p. 164.

of attitudes and behaviors of group members will decrease because conformity is the result of cohesion (30).

The most comprehensive study of group cohesiveness within the work environment has been done by Seashore (34). Findings from this study show that members of groups exhibiting a high degree of cohesiveness expressed less anxiety about managerial pressures and support from the organization, considered their jobs more prestigious, had greater opportunity to interact because the size of the group was smaller, and had worked longer in the specific job than members of groups displaying a low degree of cohesiveness. Group member similarities of age and educational background had little effect on the degree of cohesiveness of the groups studied.

Locomotion within the informal organization. Group locomotion is a concept which involves not only the whole group but also each individual member (30). First, it refers to group effectiveness: the ability of a group to satisfy its purpose, whatever this may be. Secondly, locomotion concerns group efficiency: the success a group has in satisfying the individual needs of its members (40). For group locomotion to occur, there must be some degree of cohesiveness among the members for them to work together toward their common purpose and for them to feel that the group is efficient in satisfying their needs.

Size of the informal organization. As previously noted, the informal organization is composed of persons having direct 'face to face' relations. Communication among the membership is vital to the maintenance of such personal associations. As the size of a group increases the amount of participation possible for each individual decreases, thus causing a degree of dissatisfaction for those persons who cannot participate as actively as they desire. Group consensus becomes increasingly difficult as the number of people involved grows. Group membership which develops beyond a number which can maintain satisfactory personal interaction inevitably subdivides into smaller groups in search of more satisfying personal associations (16).

There is no way of estimating the ideal size of an informal group. Each group will consist of a membership only as large as it is possible for the informal organization to fulfill its four basic functions: to perpetuate cultural values, to provide social satisfaction, to communicate, and to maintain social control (9).

Influence of informal group  
behavior on managerial  
processes

In the preceding discussion there have been subtle references to the possible difficulties caused by the informal group within the formal organization. This section will bring these drawbacks to the fore and present the benefits created by the informal organization which may influence managerial processes.

Drawbacks. Davis (9) alludes to the drawbacks as arising in conjunction with the four basic functions of the informal organization. The first function, perpetuation of cultural values, brings about resistance to change both within the work situation and the group's social structure. Provision for social stratification, the second function, may create role conflict between the expectations of the individual's role by the informal organization and the formal organization. In the discussion of communication, rumor was presented as a definite problem developing from this third major function. Finally, social control causes conformity to the norms established by the group. All the negative influences which the informal organization can exert on the managerial processes of the profit oriented food service operations under study are related to the four dysfunctions as stated above.

Benefits. Davis (9) believes there are seven ways<sup>2</sup> in which informal organizations may beneficially influence the managerial processes of the enterprise:

1. To blend formal systems to make a workable system of getting work done,
2. To lighten the work load of the formal manager,
3. To fill gaps in formal orders or in managers' abilities,

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<sup>2</sup>Keith Davis, Human Relations at Work (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1962), p. 244.

4. To give satisfaction and stability to work groups,
5. To be a useful channel of employee communication,
6. To act as a safety valve for frustrations and other emotional problems of the work group,
7. To encourage a manager to plan and act more carefully than he would otherwise.

The extent of beneficial influence exerted by informal groups depends upon the relative sensitivity of management to the informal organization(s) which exist within the enterprise and management's ability to capitalize on the operative potential of such groups.

## METHOD OF INVESTIGATION

### The Sample

For this exploratory study a very limited sample of eight profit oriented food service operations was selected from a group of well-patronized table service restaurants located within the Lansing-East Lansing area. Lansing, the Capitol City of Michigan, is centrally located in the Lower Peninsula and is considered an important manufacturing center for the automotive industry. East Lansing is the site of the resident campus of a major State university with a student population in excess of 40,000.

The clienteles of the selected establishments are drawn from several sources. In addition to permanent residents and the changing young adult population of the university community, these facilities also serve a variety of transients who frequent the area because of automotive business interests, the array of educational, cultural, and recreational programs of the university and the centrality of State government processes.

Selection of the eight establishments for study was restricted to two major types of public services rendered: four which provide lodging and meal accommodations and four



which offer meal service only. Sub-sample members of the lodging and meals class included three establishments which are corporate owned and affiliated with nationwide chains and one that is a State owned single-unit facility which functions in conjunction with the public university. Among the sub-sample members of the meals only class one is a corporate owned unit of a nationwide chain, one is a branch of a privately owned statewide chain, and two are privately owned single-unit establishments each of which has served the Lansing-East Lansing community for more than a decade.

#### Survey Procedure

Data for the study were collected through on-premise interviews with management personnel. In all cases, the interviewees were persons with major responsibility for managing the meal service component of the facility. An interview guide was developed to assure collection of comparable information about the eight operations selected for study. Three types of data were sought: operational characteristics of the facility, basic employment policies, and opinions of interviewees concerning (a) the existence and role(s) of employee informal groups within their organizations and (b) the influence of these informal employee associations on the managerial processes of the operation. All interviews were personally conducted by the investigator.

### Interview guide

In construction of the guide a concerted effort was made to devise a format of inquiry which would:

- a. encourage development of rapport between the interviewee and the interrogator,
- b. provide the interviewer with an overview of the basic operational characteristics and employment policies of the establishment,
- c. elicit general information concerning the professional experience of the interviewee,
- d. maximize the willingness of the interviewee to share his opinions about the influence of employee group behavior on the policies and procedures of his food service facility, and
- e. minimize the data recording time during the interview.

The information sought was divided into three major sections: facility characteristics, employment policies, and informal group associations. The content elements of the first two sections elicited factual information pertaining to the operation per se whereas the questions posed in the third section were designed to examine the sensitivity of the interviewee to the current influences of employee group associations upon the managerial processes of his organization. Throughout the guide, sufficient write-in space was provided for direct recording of essential response data during the interview. Space was also provided at the end of the guide for noting additional information garnered by the interviewer but not recorded in the presence of the interviewee. A copy of the guide is included in the Appendix, page 64.

The first section of the guide, facility characteristics, contains fifteen items three of which permit general classification of the facility, seven which pertain to specific operational factors of the local unit, and five which identify the interviewee by name and title and elicit descriptive data about his professional experience in the food service field.

The second section, employment policies, consists of nine items of inquiry. The first five items are related to basic managerial tasks: hiring and assignment of new employees, job training, worker evaluation, and employee promotion. Ways in which these tasks are handled by management usually affect employee attitudes toward and satisfaction with the organization. Item six concerns communication and is designed to bring conceptual information into the realm of employment policies. Within the organizational structure downward communication to employees is a managerial responsibility. Upward communication from employees to management is dependent upon the access channels provided for employees by management. Since upward communication as well as horizontal diffusion of information are recognized functions of informal group members, management's views concerning the importance of providing effective channels for downward and upward communication should be revealed in the policies and procedures established for these purposes. Items seven, eight, and nine concern three types of opportunities for socialization among employees: coffee breaks and meal

periods during working hours and recreational activities outside of normal working hours. Such gatherings often provide the means by which persons who meet regularly on an informal basis can satisfy their basic need for social ties, and through which they can contribute to the enjoyment of others as well as derive social satisfaction for themselves.

The third and final section of the interview guide is focused on eleven elements pertaining to informal group associations. The questions formulated for this section are based on the concepts held by some psychologists and sociologists concerning group generation, group structure and behavioral processes, and the potential influences of informal group behaviors on managerial processes as presented in the section of this paper entitled Concepts of Group Generation and Behavior (pages 4-27). Management's recognition of and opinions about the existence and behavior of informal groups within the operations surveyed should permit general assessment of the extent of managerial sensitivity to the possible influences of such groups on the managerial process of the operation. Personal and environmental factors which may promote group generation are the emphasis of the first five questions. The remaining six questions relate to the development of group structure and the manner in which employees behave or react within the structured situations presented for consideration.

### Interview procedure

The interview procedure used by this investigator is described in the following paragraphs. First, the managerial person most directly responsible for the food service segment of the operation was contacted, in person, by the interviewer. A brief explanation of the project was given and the individual's participation in the study requested. If cooperation was indicated, a second appointment was scheduled at the convenience of the interviewee.

Punctuality was considered imperative in keeping the appointment. In order to redirect the thoughts of the respondent to the basic elements of the problem under study, the project was discussed in further detail than at the time of the initial contact. The assurance was made that the names of the organization and the respondent would be held in confidence in reporting the study results. In an effort to clarify the general purposes of the interview, the interviewee was encouraged to ask any questions which he had regarding the project.

The items contained in the interview guide were posed to the interviewee in a manner designed to reduce or avoid implication of personal bias of the investigator. Operational examples were used to clarify questions, avoid misunderstanding, and encourage freedom of response. A concerted effort was made to listen to the interviewee's replies for content and intonation. Particular attention

was given to what the person said as well as to what he did not say.

During the interview session, only key words were used to record responses directly upon the guide. After leaving the premises, these notations were transcribed into more detailed descriptive answers. At the conclusion of the interview, the participant was thanked for his cooperation.

#### Procedure for Analysis of the Interview Data

Interview data were subjectively evaluated by the investigator to identify similarities and differences among facility characteristics, employment policies, and opinions of participants concerning the existence and role(s) of informal group associations within the two types of operations surveyed. Within and between facility type comparisons were made in an effort to evaluate the sensitivity of the survey participants to the current and potential influences of workers' informal groups upon the managerial processes of these profit oriented establishments.

## ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

The eight profit oriented table service restaurants included in the study sample represent two different types of meal service operations: four in which the service of meals is an essential supportive service physically and operationally associated with a business mainly concerned with public lodging and four whose primary purpose is public meal service but which are neither physically nor operationally associated with a public lodging component. To facilitate comparison of the establishments studied, both within and between service types, the survey findings are tabulated, reported, and discussed according to the type of public service rendered. For consistency in reporting, individual establishments are alphabetically coded: A, B, C, D are the four restaurants in the lodging and meals class and E, F, G, H are the four restaurants in the meals only class.

The findings of the study are presented in the sequence used in the design of the interview guide (see Appendix, page 64).

### Facility Characteristics

The facility characteristics of the establishments surveyed are detailed in Table 1. The descriptive components

TABLE 1. Organizational Characteristics of Two Types of Food Service Operations Selected for Study

Characteristics	Organizations							
	Lodging and Meals*				Meals Only**			
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
<u>TOTAL ORGANIZATION (Units)</u>	43	850	14	1	800	13	1	1
<u>LOCAL OPERATION</u>								
Years Under Present Management	13	8	8	16	13	13	11	53
Employees								
Number of Supervisors	2	1	3	10	5	2	4	4
Number of Employees	18	45	90	105	40	32	50	44
Ratio of Supervisors to Employees	1:9	1:45	1:30	1:10.5	1:8	1:16	1:12.5	1:11
Unionization of Employees								
Name of Union								
Hotel, Restaurant, & Bartenders Intn'l.	X							
Am. Fed. of State, County, & Municipal Employees				X				
Number of Members								
All Workers	X		X					
All Full-Time Workers				X				
Patterns of Service								
Days/Week	7	7	7	7	7	7	6	6
Hours/Day	11	16	16	8	17	13	11	11
Approximate Volume/Day	350	390	575	1,500	800	1,150	200	500
Types of Service Per Day								
Continuous, Two Meals		X	X		X	X	X	X
Continuous, Three Meals								
Restricted, Three Meals	X			X				
<u>EMPLOYMENT HISTORY OF THE INTERVIEWEES</u>								
Years with Present Organization	7	1	1	16	2	9	4	20+
Years in Present Position	7	1	1	16	2	2	4	3
Years in Food Service Field	6-10	11-15	6-10	20+	1-5	20+	1-5	20+
Previous Food Service Experience								
Hotels	X	X	X					
Residence Halls				X				
Resorts								
Restaurants		X	X		X	X	X	X
University Unions				X				

\*A, B, C = Corporate owned, multi-unit, nationwide; D = State owned, single-unit.

\*\*E = Corporate owned, multi-unit, nationwide; F = Privately owned, multi-unit, statewide; G &amp; H = Privately owned, single-units.



for each operation include: type of ownership, type of geographic distribution and number of units in the total organization, number of years the local unit has been under its present management, the nature of the food service staff, patterns and types of meal service, and the professional employment history of the interviewee.

#### Total organization

Five of the establishments surveyed, A, B, C, E, and F, are members of multi-unit organizations. The corporations that own establishments A, B, C, and E vary in size and maintain between 14 and 850 nationwide operations whereas establishment F is one of a 13 unit privately owned, statewide chain. Enterprises D, G, and H are all single units but differ with respect to ownership. Operations G and H are privately owned and D is State owned.

#### Local operation

Of the lodging and meals class, operations A and D have been under their present managements for over a decade and B and C for slightly less than ten years. Within the meals only class, restaurants E, F, and G have been operated by their respective managements for ten to fifteen years whereas operation H has been continuously under the same management for fifty-three years. Thus, for the sample studied, all operations may be considered relatively stable.

Manpower needs differ widely among sample members with respect to both supervisory personnel and food service workers. The variance in establishment ratios of supervisors to employees ranges from 1:9 to 1:45 within the lodging and meals class and from 1:8 to 1:16 within the meals only class. Employees of only three of the eight operations surveyed, A, C, and D, are unionized and all belong to the lodging and meals class. All workers of establishments A and C are members of the Hotel, Restaurant, and Bartenders International Union, while only full-time employees of establishment D are affiliated with the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees.

Six of the establishments sampled, all of the lodging and meals class and E and F of the meals only class, offer food service to the public seven days a week. Operations G and H, the two privately owned single-units, are open only six days per week.

Within the limits of these data, there appears to be little relationship between total number of daily serving hours and volume of patrons served. Within the lodging and meals class operation D, which is located on the university campus, averages a greater number of patrons per day, than establishments A, B, and C combined although D has the shortest total serving time of the four operations. Similarly, establishment F handles a larger daily volume of patrons than other members of the meals only group; an average of 1,150 patrons in thirteen hours. Operation E serves

800 daily covers in seventeen hours and in eleven hours G and H average only 200 and 500, respectively.

Five of the establishments, A, B, C, D, and E, serve breakfast, luncheon, and dinner. Of these operations, B, C, and E offer continuous service and A and D operate under set meal hour patterns. Establishments F, G, and H serve luncheon and dinner only and are open continuously from late morning to late evening.

Employment history of the interviewees

Inquiry was made into three aspects of the employment history of the interviewees: the number of years with the present organization, the length of time in the present position, and the total years and areas of previous experience in the food service field. Within the lodging and meals class, interviewees have spent from one to sixteen years with the company. The range is two to more than twenty years for the members of the meals only class. Six of the eight interviewees have been in their present positions for the same length of time that they have been affiliated with the organization. Only respondents F and H have held their current positions for less time than their organization membership. The employment stability of the interviewees reflects considerable variation among the establishments studied.

The interviewees of establishments A and C have between six and ten years experience in the food service field. In establishment B, the range is eleven to fifteen years and in operation D, over twenty years. Two of the four respondents of the meals only establishments, E and G, have been in the field five years or less, and two, F and H, for over twenty years. Differences reported by interviewees of the lodging and meals class, with respect to years of food service experience show less variation than the years of experience of members of the meals only class. Experience in the food service field was gained by the managerial representatives of the lodging and meals class by previous employment in hotels, residence halls, resorts, restaurants, and university unions or the combination of these. The interviewees of operations E, F, G, and H have previous experience in restaurants only.

#### Employment Policies

In the conduct of every business there is an inherent need for establishing employment policies which serve as operational guides in handling the personnel component of the business. Employment policies concerning hiring, job training, worker evaluation, employee promotion, channels of communication, and job-related opportunities for employee socialization as reported by the establishments surveyed are summarized below.

### Hiring policies

Irrespective of facility type, final authority and responsibility for hiring food service workers rests with the manager of each operation. In all cases, prospective applicants are acquired through newspaper advertising or walk-in requests. In only two of the eight operations, D and H, are persons other than the manager of the food service unit involved in the hiring process. In establishment D, preliminary screening is conducted by a central personnel office before the applicant is referred to the food service manager for final interview. In establishment H, food service supervisors assist in the evaluation of prospective candidates.

### Job training

In all establishments surveyed new employees are hired for a specific job and are given some measure of on-the-job training. However, the responsibility for orienting and training new employees varies among establishments with respect to the person(s) designated to perform these tasks. In establishment A, the manger assumes full responsibility for orienting and training all new employees. In five establishments, B, C, F, G, and H, the orientation and training responsibilities are delegated to experienced employees whereas in establishments D and E these responsibilities are shared by the manager and selected employees of the unit. Of the eight operations under study only B, a

lodging and meals establishment and E, a meals only enterprise, use additional means for acclimating the new employee to his position. In these two cases, job manuals, printed job descriptions, and orientation-training films are provided by operation B whereas operation E limits its supplementary training materials to pamphlets.

### Worker evaluation

Among the operations studied, there is only limited evidence from the interview data that established worker evaluation policies and procedures are deemed essential. It is recognized also that this is a sensitive area of inquiry and the lack of definitive information gained by the interviewer may reflect an unwillingness on the part of the interviewees to divulge the evaluative policies and methods they actually use. However, from the limited responses received, worker performance is evaluated in one of two ways; either formally with an established frequency or informally as the need arises.

Of the eight operations studied only three, C, D, and F indicated that formal evaluation of worker performance by a member of the managerial team is done with scheduled frequency. In operation C employee evaluation takes place every six months, in operation D only new workers are appraised at the end of the first three and six month periods of their employment, and in operation F evaluation of job performance for all workers is done on an annual

basis. Probationary periods for new employees exist in only two operations, B and D, both members of the lodging and meals class, with periods of three and six months, respectively. Only three of the eight persons interviewed indicated they use informal means for evaluating their workers. These respondents are the food service managers of operations E, G, and H, all in the meals only class. While it is unrealistic to believe that operations A and B do not evaluate worker performance by some means, the persons interviewed from these establishments were reticent to share policies and/or procedures associated with this aspect of their business.

#### Employee promotion

Interview data pertaining to employee promotions in the operations sampled suggest that, in general, the policies and criteria for employee advancement are not very well defined. It further appears that decisions related to changes in job assignments and promotions for food service employees within local units are based on the personal judgments of management rather than guided by established policies. According to all interviewees of the establishments in the lodging and meals class they have no stated policies or promotion criteria. Within these enterprises, the highest position level to which an employee can be promoted is chef or assistant chef in operations A and C, a beginning level management position in B, and to a level not to exceed

that of supervisor in operation D. Among the meals only food service establishments a worker can progress to a managerial position in operation E by meeting basic educational pre-requisites. Demonstrated ability is the only criterion for promotion to a managerial level or chef or assistant chef levels in operations F and G. Because worker promotion is uncommon in operation H, there are no established policies or maximum levels of advancement.

#### Channels of communication

As shown in Table 2, the management of three of the establishments surveyed, D, lodging and meals, and G and H, meals only, use group meetings and personal contact as communication channels to employees. In operations B and E, the downward flow of information occurs by combining group meetings and printed materials posted on bulletin boards. Only group meetings or bulletin boards are used in establishments A and C, respectively, while operator F indicated he follows no particular plan in communicating to his employees.

Employee to management channels of communication are through group meetings only in operation E, group meetings and personal contact in establishment H, and personal contact only in enterprises A, B, F, and G. Information which is directed upward reaches management via the supervisors of operation D, whereas no particular channel for employee to management communication was known to the interviewee in establishment C.



TABLE 2. Communication Channels for Information Flow Between Management and Employees in Two Types of Food Service Operations Selected for Study

Communication Channels	Organizations							
	Lodging and Meals*				Meals Only**			
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H
Management to Employees								
Group Meetings and Bulletin Boards		X			X			
Personal Contact				X			X	X
Group Meetings Only	X							
Bulletin Boards Only			X					
No Set Pattern						X		
Employee to Management								
Group Meetings Only					X			
Group Meetings and Personal Contact								X
Personal Contact Only	X	X				X	X	
Via Supervisors				X				
Unknown			X					

\*A,B,C = Corporate owned, multi-unit, nationwide; D = State owned, single-unit.

\*\*E = Corporate owned, multi-unit, nationwide; F = Privately owned, multi-unit, statewide; G & H = Privately owned, single-units.

### Employee socialization

Common to all establishments surveyed is the provision of time for coffee breaks and meal periods during employee working hours. In seven of the eight operations, however, the times when employees may take a coffee break or eat their meals are contingent upon the immediate needs of the operation and the number of patrons in the establishment. Only one establishment, D, has regularly scheduled times for coffee breaks and meal periods for all food service workers. Because of the scheduled pattern of public meal service, employees are only permitted off-duty time before and after the hours this operation is open to the public.

Employer sponsored, off-premise recreational opportunities for employees are provided by operations A, D, and F only. In A and D such activities are open to the employees of both the lodging and meal service components of the establishment. Operation F, on the other hand, is a meals only establishment with employer sponsored, off-premise recreational opportunities limited to food service workers. In operations A, B, and H, the interviewees did not appear to be aware of any spontaneous, off-premise employee socialization.

### Informal Group Associations

According to some behavioral scientists (4, 28, 33, 40, 41) the generation of employee informal group associations is dependent upon both personal and environmental

factors. The membership structure and behavioral processes of such groups result from the conditions or circumstances encountered by employees in the work setting. Responses of the eight interviewees as to how they believe certain factors which the behavioral scientists often associate with group phenomena affect the informal groups of their respective establishments are summarized below.

#### Group generation

Interviewees were queried about three personal and two environmental factors which may lead to informal group generation. In the opinions of the respondents, employees with the longest service in operations B and C usually tend to associate informally. This type of association occurs only occasionally in establishments A, E, and H and is not evident in operations D, F, and G.

Although friends of present workers can be employed in all establishments studied, only six operations B, C, E, F, G, and H, permit the hiring of relatives. Under these circumstances it is possible that employee associations which exist outside the work setting can affect employee relations within the work setting. Where such employment practices exist, friendship ties and/or kinship ties are considered natural generators of worker informal groups.

The degree to which interviewees felt that similarities in work experience and job assignment affected the formation of informal employee associations within

their operations varied among establishments. According to respondents A, B, C, and E, work experience similarities did promote personal ties among their employees whereas respondents D, G, and H did not see this as a factor of influence. Respondent F had no opinion on this factor with respect to his operation. Opinions concerning the effect of like job assignments on the formation of social ties among workers indicated that in seven of the eight operations studied it was felt that commonality of assignment does foster the formation of social ties among employees although judgments concerning the extent to which such associations are formed vary among interviewees. According to respondents, social ties among workers of like assignments are more prevalent in operations B, C, and E than in operations D, F, G, and H. The interviewee of establishment A was unwilling to comment on how job assignments affected worker socialization in his operation.

Residential proximity appeared to be somewhat influential in the formation of social ties among persons employed by the same establishment. Six of the eight persons interviewed believe that in their operations persons who reside near each other tend to form social ties whereas the operators of establishments B and E do not feel this is true among their employees.

Group structure and behavioral process

In all establishments studied interviewees' responses to questions concerning group membership structures, intra-group roles, and the group behaviors evoked by these informal employee associations were too indefinite to permit meaningful comparisons within or between food service facility types. Forthright admissions by the interviewees concerning their lack of knowledge about the composition of such groups within their operations and the resultant behaviors evoked by such employee associations appeared to indicate that the persons interviewed either did not recognize the potential effects such groups can have on the conduct of the business or were reluctant to reveal their personal views about the relationships and activities of their employees with respect to the questions posed. The questions related to group structure and behavioral process which were of particular concern to the investigator are listed in the interview guide on page 66 of the Appendix.

The following information is based on the limited responses and comments of the interviewees and is presented in summary with full realization that such broad statements lack sufficient support to be viewed as substantive findings. In general, the responses and comments of the interviewees indicated that:

1. in the absence of the immediate supervisor, certain employees within the operation do temporarily assume leadership roles in an attempt to assure continuous productivity for the operation,

2. in cases where job transfer is requested by the worker and granted by management such actions have little or no affect on informal group behavior,
3. relationships among full-time and part-time workers within the respective operations are usually amicable although part-time college students sometimes tend to associate more with each other than with other workers in the establishment,
4. in operations where special catering functions sometimes require the employment of additional workers for short term assignments rapport and cooperation among regular and temporary employees are easily established,
5. employee turnover is a continuing circumstance in all establishments and occurs primarily among the lower status positions associated with the less desirable pre-preparation activities of food production, dishwashing, and jobs offering only part-time employment,
6. employee reactions to the addition of new menu items or the introduction of variations in established items are usually favorable except in cases where price changes are indicated and employees are the natural recipients of customer complaints,
7. employee reactions to increased work loads and occasional extension of public meal service hours to accommodate clientele volume generated by special or periodic activities of the community are nearly always favorable providing the employees are adequately informed and rewarded by management,
8. employee resistance to the consistent use of portion control equipment is prevalent in all operations studied although the introduction of other types of new and/or more efficient production and service equipment poses no similar problem for management,
9. commercially processed partially and/or fully prepared menu items are not served with regularity in any of the operations included in this study and when occasional use is made of these products employees react with disfavor.

## SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

Industrial psychologists and sociologists have discovered that within large corporations two different types of organizational systems exist, the formal organization and the informal group(s) or organization(s). The writings of such behavioral scientists were reviewed in an attempt to identify the theoretical concepts which pertain to informal group generation, structure, and behavioral processes. From the concepts thus identified, the most important were used as a base for studying the sensitivity of the managers of a few profit oriented food service establishments in Michigan to the current and potential influences of workers' informal groups upon the managerial processes of their respective establishments.

The theoretical concepts were of two general categories: those which pertain to group generation and those which relate to group structure and behavioral process. Concepts of group generation included the satisfaction of individual needs, personal and environmental factors which are secondary bases for informal group generation, and the possible types of informal groups formed. The conceptual aspects of informal group structure included role differentiation, role conflict, and internal leadership. The basic

functions of the informal organization, cohesion within the group, and the locomotion and size of the group were the conceptual elements relating to behavioral process.

The survey sample consisted of eight profit oriented table service restaurants in the Lansing-East Lansing area. These establishments are of two public service types: four which offer meal service as a function secondary to the lodging component of the operation and four which offer meal service only. Ownership and the geographic distribution of the total number of units affiliated with each of the local establishments varied within classes. Through an on-premise interview with a member of the food service managerial team in each restaurant the investigator sought two types of data: (a) descriptive information concerning the operational characteristics and employment policies of each establishment and (b) the opinions of the interviewee concerning the existence, structure and behavioral processes of employee informal groups within his operation. A copy of the interrogator's guide appears in the Appendix, page 64.

Three items of inquiry which further help to characterize each operation included unionization status, patterns of public meal service, and the food service employment history of the interviewees. Within the limitations of these data, only the lodging and meals operations were involved with employee unionization. Patterns of public meal service varied among sample members and were of three general types: continuous all-day service from breakfast through dinner,



continuous service from luncheon through late evening, and restricted service periods for breakfast, luncheon, and dinner. Data regarding the food service related employment history of the interviewees revealed wide variations among sample members with respect to the total number of years in the food service field, the length of time each had been employed by the current organization, and the years each had been in his present position within the organization. With respect to the previous food service experience of the interviewees, types of work experience were more limited for those associated with meals only operations than for those employed by lodging and meals establishments.

Within every business the employment policies (expressed and/or implied) serve as operational guides in dealing with personnel. Among the restaurants selected for study, the employment policies of all operations were similar in that unit managers have final authority and responsibility for hiring food service workers from candidates obtained primarily through newspaper advertising or walk-in applicants. Among all sample members, policies dealing with job orientation and training for new workers stressed on-the-job training. In five of the operations on-the-job training was the delegated responsibility of experienced employees. In the remaining cases, management either retained full responsibility for the training function or shared it with selected workers. Additional off-the-job formal training,

although it did exist, was not common among the establishments surveyed.

Information pertaining to the method(s) by which management evaluates workers was not a productive area of inquiry. Although a few interviewees indicated the use of either formal or informal techniques, most survey participants appeared to be unwilling to divulge definitive information about their policies and/or procedures for employee evaluation. From the data received, the policies and criteria for employee promotion are relatively obscure. More than half of the operations sampled have no established criteria on which to base worker advancement potential. The decision of job advancement for food service workers seems to depend solely on the personal judgment of the unit manager. If worker evaluation procedures are ill-defined and if employees do not know what criteria, if any, must be fulfilled in order to progress within the employment setting, it is conceivable that their satisfaction with both the job and the employer will decrease. When such conditions exist, concomitant increases in employee turnover usually follow.

Policies for establishing downward communication channels from management to employees are fairly consistent in the majority of the operations studied. However, one operation indicated no set pattern for the downward flow of information whereas another business relied solely upon a channel which eliminates all personal contact between management and employees. In most of the operations studied,

channels for upward employee to management communication flow are primarily dependent upon occasional personal contacts between parties.

According to some behavioral scientists (17, 21, 24), one of the basic functions of an informal organization is horizontal and vertical communications. When two-way vertical channels are not provided, concise and accurate information can not flow between the principal parties and the informal communication channel or grapevine activates itself and generates information flow usually in the form of rumors. Despite the theory that rumors generally consist of erroneous information, without true open two-way communication between management and employees, rumors are self-perpetuated and remain unchecked until they dwindle into oblivion and a new one begins. Thus, workers only receive further incorrect information. The interviewees did not seem to be very sensitive to the potential situations which often develop because of inadequate channels for employee to management communication and feedback.

Opportunities are provided for employee socialization in the form of coffee breaks and meal periods during working hours by all establishments. Only a few employers sponsor additional off-premise recreational activities. Behavioral scientists have noted that sanctioned opportunities for socialization among workers tend to foster the development of informal groups or cliques. The majority of the interviewees recognized that social ties which are

developed in the work situation are carried over, to some degree, to spontaneous off-premise personal associations.

In an attempt to satisfy basic individual social and egoistic needs, informal group associations are generated among employees. This study shows that, for the operations sampled, informal associations are sometimes generated by personal factors related to similarities in years of service with an establishment and types of work experience, and by environmental factors such as similar job assignments which permit physical proximity and require commonality of knowledge and skills among individuals, the nearness of workers with respect to personal residency, and the opportunities for employee socialization which occur both during and after working hours. The data show further that the presence of informal group associations is recognized by all managerial personnel interviewed. In operations that have policies which permit concurrent employment of friends and/or relatives, friendship-kinship groups are automatically generated. Certain employment policies, such as employee job training and promotion, tend to foster vertical cliques and sub-cliques whereas horizontal cliques and subcliques sometimes develop between and among full- and part-time employees.

The findings from this study offer little concrete evidence in support of the group structure and behavioral process concepts deemed important by the investigator. The persons interviewed appeared to be either unmindful of or reluctant to acknowledge the potential influences

of employees' informal groups on the managerial processes of their respective establishments. The responses and comments tended to reflect feelings of managerial control with respect to their employee group associations rather than serious concern for the influences such groups do or could have on the operational decisions of their businesses. It is conceivable, however, that because each of the operations studied has relatively few food service employees (less than fifty including all full- and part-time personnel) the informal employee organizations of these establishments are not of sufficient size to measurably affect the operational processes favored by management.

Despite the limited scope of this exploratory study there is reasonable evidence that the theoretical concepts of informal group generation, structure, and behavior developed by the behavioral scientists can be meaningfully applied to the study of workers' informal organizations in profit oriented food service operations. The results of this survey suggest the need for larger and more definitive studies concerning:

1. factors which affect managerial process decisions,
2. managerial techniques of leadership and employee control,
3. the effect of food service establishment size on worker informal group generation, structure, and behavior, and
4. employees' views regarding the potential influences of their informal organizations upon the managerial processes of their operations.

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## **APPENDIX**

Establishment \_\_\_\_\_

## FACILITY CHARACTERISTICS

### FACILITY CLASSIFICATION

1. Public Service Type: \_\_\_\_\_ Lodging & Meals \_\_\_\_\_ Meals Only
2. Ownership: \_\_\_\_\_ Public \_\_\_\_\_ Corporate \_\_\_\_\_ Private
3. Geographic Unit Distribution:  
\_\_\_\_\_ Nationwide \_\_\_\_\_ Statewide Only \_\_\_\_\_ Local Only  
(No.) (No.) (No.)

### LOCAL UNIT

4. Years Under Present Management \_\_\_\_\_
5. Number of Food Service Supervisors \_\_\_\_\_
6. Number of Food Service Employees \_\_\_\_\_
7. Service Days per Week \_\_\_\_\_
8. Serving Hours per Day \_\_\_\_\_
9. Average Number of Patrons per Day \_\_\_\_\_
10. Unionization \_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Union \_\_\_\_\_  
Number of Members \_\_\_\_\_

### INTERVIEWEE

11. Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Present Position Title: \_\_\_\_\_
12. Years with Present Organization: \_\_\_\_\_
13. Years in Present Position: \_\_\_\_\_
14. Total Years in Food Service Field:  
\_\_\_\_\_ 1-5 \_\_\_\_\_ 6-10 \_\_\_\_\_ 11-15 \_\_\_\_\_ 16-20 \_\_\_\_\_ Over 20
15. Types of Previous Food Service Experience:

## EMPLOYMENT POLICIES

1. Hiring

By Whom \_\_\_\_\_ Where \_\_\_\_\_

Source of Applicants \_\_\_\_\_

2. Job Training

\_\_\_\_\_ Informal On-the-Job By Whom \_\_\_\_\_

Method(s) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Formal Off-the-Job

Method(s) \_\_\_\_\_

3. Worker Evaluation

\_\_\_\_\_ Formal Frequency \_\_\_\_\_ By Whom \_\_\_\_\_

Method(s) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Informal Frequency \_\_\_\_\_ By Whom \_\_\_\_\_

Method(s) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Probation Period Length \_\_\_\_\_

4. Employee Promotion

Recommended by \_\_\_\_\_ Granted by \_\_\_\_\_

Criteria \_\_\_\_\_

Possible Level(s) \_\_\_\_\_

5. Communication Channels

Management to Employees \_\_\_\_\_  
(types)

Employee to Management \_\_\_\_\_  
(types)

6. Employee Socialization

During Working Hours: Coffee Breaks \_\_\_\_\_  
(schedule; frequency)

Meal Periods \_\_\_\_\_  
(schedule; frequency)

Outside Recreational:

\_\_\_\_ Employer Sponsored \_\_\_\_\_  
(describe)

\_\_\_\_ Employee Generated \_\_\_\_\_  
(describe)

### INFORMAL GROUP ASSOCIATIONS

#### GROUP GENERATION

1. Do employees with longest service in your operation tend to associate informally? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Do you hire friends or relatives of current employees?  
Friends \_\_\_\_\_ Relatives \_\_\_\_\_
3. Do employees of similar backgrounds in work experience form personal ties? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Do employees with similar work assignments form social ties? \_\_\_\_\_
5. Do employees who reside near each other within a community form social ties? \_\_\_\_\_



GROUP STRUCTURE AND BEHAVIORAL  
PROCESS

6. When a supervisor is not present, do certain employees assume informal leadership for operational needs either in performance or reporting needs to others?

7. Are you confronted with shifting employees to another location (Job Transfer)?\_\_\_\_\_

How does the individual employee react to job transfer?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

How do the remaining employees react to the job transfer of others?\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

8. How do regular part-time and full-time employees relate to one another?

9. Does your establishment offer catering services?\_\_\_\_\_

For such occasions, do you bring in extra service personnel?\_\_\_\_\_

How do regular employees accept temporary employees?

10. How much employee turnover do you have?\_\_\_\_\_

Does turnover differ among job classifications?

11. How do your employees react to:

the addition of new menu items?

increases in hours of service?

increases in work loads?

what areas?

the introduction of new production equipment?

the introduction of portion control equipment?

the introduction of commercially processed partially  
and/or fully prepared menu items?

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS



MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF HOME ECONOMICS  
EAST LANSING, MICHIGAN

Stephens, Diane Vachout

Informal Group Generation and Behavior in Profit Oriented Food Service Operations.

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