DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 098 650 CS 500 900

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TITLE Developing a Grounded Communication Theory: An Approach to Interpersonal Behavior in an Organization.
PUB DATE Apr 74
NOTE 24p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Communication Association (New Orleans, April 17-20, 1974)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.75 HC-$1.50 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS *Field Studies; Higher Education; Human Relations; *Interpersonal Relationship; *Organizational Communication; Organizational Development; *Research Design; Social Relations; *Theories

ABSTRACT

This research project focused on the development of communication theory from qualitative data gathered through unstructured methods in a natural setting. The project emphasized the search for and discovery of communication variables by using data collection methods (unstructured interviews and nonparticipant observation) that provided detailed descriptions of behaviors and attitudes on how individuals communicate interpersonally in an organization setting and what variables influence the ways individuals communicate. A number of hypotheses were tested and the results are contained in the conclusion of this study. (RB)

ICA Convention, April, 1974
New Orleans, La.

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DEVELOPING A GROUNDED COMMUNICATION THEORY:

AN APPROACH TO INTERPERSONAL BEHAVIOR IN AN ORGANIZATION

Introduction

This research project focused on the development of communication theory from qualitative data gathered through unstructured methods in a natural setting. Rather than reviewing and interpreting the literature in organizational communication to tease out a suitably interesting and relevant research question to scientifically test, the project emphasized the search for and discovery of communication variables by useing data collection methods (unstructured interviews and non-participant observation) that provided detailed descriptions of behaviors and attitudes on: (1) How individuals communicate interpersonally in an organizational setting? and (2) What variables influence the ways individuals communicate?

Identifying the type of organizational research implied by these research questions and data gathering methods is useful in giving the reader a reference point for understanding the direction of the paper. Evans' (1971) typology of organizational research strategies includes the case study, the sample survey, the laboratory experiment, and the field experiment (p. 4). The use of non-participant observation and interviewing in a single organization places this study in Evans' case study category.

These methods are consistent with the growing demand for more descriptive, systemic research in communication. This direction in speech communication is similar to one in psychology calling for more emphasis on the power to describe

and understand rather than the power to predict and control (Lipgar, 1968, Ve nplanck, 1970, and Bakan, 1972). For example, Borman's (1970) paper places calculated emphasis on description at the possible expense of less experimental testing, by referencing Michael Polaniyi who feels " we should lay aside the word science for the next decade or two and give people the freedom to find out that we need more knowledge (p. 215)."

Smith (1972) offers additional substantiation for descriptive field research and does so powerfully in choosing his point of departure. He begins with Newton's mechanistic position and Whitehead's process position for viewing the nature of the world. In doing so, he shows a philosophical move from determinism and predictability to change and flux. He then documents an inconsistency in speech communication scholarship showing a conceptual commitment to Whitehead's concept of process but a research record showing near exclusive use of the linear deterministic model borrowed from psychology (pp. 176, 177). Smith follows his explication of the idea of process and its rarity in communication research with some specific recommendations on how we might move toward achieving more process research through accepting the following methodological assumptions.

1. Instill richness of explanation as a measure of acceptance.
2. Stipulate influences that might affect observer bias in reporting.
3. Accept simultaneously differing explanations as a product of varying perspectives.

4. Accept simultaneously differing explanations from the same perspective through situation and context variation.

5. Employ more wholistic perspectives to develop more complete explanations (p. 179).

Although he doesn't mention qualitative data explicitly, Smith's assumptions serve to adknowledge and legitimize its limits and to promote its assets.

Collecting case-like qualitative data not only responds to these requests for broad gauged descriptive research, but also provides the opportunity to develop a theory of relationships among construct-variables drawn from the data, a grounded theory.

Grounded theory as developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967) is a strategy developed to handle qualitative field data in a way that increases its use and contribution to the social sciences. It is best understood by contrasting it with the research methods concerned " with how accurate facts can be obtained and how theory can be more rigorously tested" (p. 1). Grounded theory addresses "how the discovery of theory from data--systematically obtained and analyzed in social research--can be furthered" (p. 1).

Grounded theory is based on the following assumptions: (1) Qualitative data is more useful than quantitative data for the discovery of variables, substantative categories, and hypotheses, while quantitative research is best used in further exploration and testing theory (p. 18). (2) The comparative analysis of

qualitative data assists in generating theory by creating conceptual categories from evidence; then the evidence from which the category emerged is used to illustrate the concept. (3) A focus on the verification and testing of theory can easily block the generation of a more rounded and more dense theory, i.e., a theory that accounts for a larger array of variables. Too frequently we are presented with well tested theory fragments. Generating throry has as its goal the development of new theories based on purposeful systematic generation from data of social research (pp. 27, 28).

These assumptions identify grounded theory as a process of research as an ever emerging entity rather than as a completed product. A more concrete notion of grounded theory will develop as the procedures used to collect and analyze the data of the research project are described and the discussion of the data is completed.

Methods

The Field Research Setting. The subject organization is a public land use and transportation planning serving Franklin County and adjacent counties in central Ohio. The organization's staff, which is composed of city and regional planners, transportation engineers, and administrative staff, functions in ways similar to a research and development organization i. e., educational level, size, and type of product created.

In addition to the freedom and support provided by the Agency's director to collect the data, the organization is particularly attractive as a research setting

because of it's laboratory-like characteristics. It is a three tiered fourty person organization located physically in one place which gives it enough structure and size to have a complex informal pattern of relationships but is still managable for observation and interview data collection.

The Interviews.* The interviewing program consisted of unstructured interviews with the organization's total membership. The interaction with the interviewees was as open-ended and general as possible with the use of slightly directive or topic related probes to encourage the responderts to define the context of their own comments.

Each day following the interview sessions the interviewer translated his written phrases and notes into a manuscript account of each interview. These were compiled in chronological order and used as one of the two basic sources of data on the organization. At the same time the interview data was being collected, the other research team member was collecting observational data on the organization.

The observations. Observational data of communication were collected to provide a comparative base for the data produced via the unstructured interviews. The guide for completing the observational research was Mc Call and Simmons' Issues in Participant Observation (1969).

*The interviewing and observing processes were accomplished separately by the two person research team. Dr. Leonard C. Hawes conducted the interviewing and Larry D. Browning completed the observations.

The observation sampling choices were based on the goals of covering the scope of the entire organization and to concurrently follow leads that pointed to critical happenings in the environment. To account for these two goals, periodic assessments of the organizations' divisions and people, as well as the circumstances of their interaction, were made.

Since the observations occurred over a four month period, special attention was given to the relationship between the observer and the organizations' members. Personal contact was kept to a minimum; special friendships were avoided; and questions about the findings of the research were treated cautiously.

After each day of observations the brief words and phrases recorded during the contact periods were elaborated on and written in manuscript form. Field notes were three or four pages in length for a two or three hour period of observation. The total length of the observation and interview manuscripts was similar (18,750 and 18,000 words respectively). These two documents provided data for analysis. The next section treats how these manuscripts were divided into units of analysis.

Developing the Unit of Analysis

The goal of this research was to observe and describe interpersonal communication occurrences within an organization. It was necessary to divide the manuscripts into mutually exclusive units. The units produced are referred to as incidents (Zelditch, 1969, Becker and Geer, 1960), acts (Zander, 1951), and single observations (Barton and Lazarsfeld, 1969). The term incident was used to refer to a datum. A summary of these definitions provided the criteria for an incident; it is a complete thought or act of behavior performed by an individual or

group of individuals as viewed by an interviewer or an observer.

The observation and interview manuscripts were reviewed to divide the data into distinct incidents. This proc yielded two hundred and thirty-three interview incidents and one hundred and ninety-three observation incidents varying in length from one sentence to one paragraph. The incidents were each numbered consecutively and labeled " OB " for observation and " IV" for interview.

Whyte's (1951) procedure for identifying and discarding the interpretative notes that interviewers and observers naturally tend to include was implemented. Each interpretative statement was bracketed and labeled " background material" by placing the letters "BG" beside the statement. One hundred and thirty-two items were background data and were not included in incident analysis.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed by reading each incident and identifying dimensions its contents suggested. The dimensions noted were used in developing descriptive labels (categories) for each dimension. These notes were analyzed until a decision was reached on forming a category, giving it a title, and establishing a relationship between the category and the incident. The final step was recording the decision by placing the category label and incident number on a 5 x 7 card and writing a descriptive phrase or sentence to connect them. This process was completed with each incident and was most operative in the first twenty to thirty percent of the data when most of the categories were being established.

The continual process of creating categories and assigning incidents was achieved by reviewing each incident, recording its dimensions and determining

whether its dimensions matched existing categories or merited assignment to a new one. Since the categories were not mutually exclusive, this meant that every existing category was reviewed and compared each time an incident was analyzed. The time required to complete this process varied from ten to forty minutes for each incident and between one hundred and one hundred and fifty hours to complete the four hundred and twenty-six incidents.

Once the data analysis was completed, the data was checked to determine if the conclusions reached by the primary researcher could be verified by individuals not involved in the analysis. This was accomplished by assigning two judges*, who participated in earlier stages of the project, to the task of reviewing the categories and incidents assigned to each. The judges assessed the propriety of incident assignment to categories by choosing to eliminate incidents from categories or to reassign them to other categories. This process eliminated sixty incidents and caused the reassignment of forty-nine incidents. The judges made additional suggestions on the accuracy of the category labels and expressed their impressions of the overall findings. These ideas were used to sharpen and improve the final alignment of the categories.

The data analysis process eventually produced a set of twenty-four categories with the following labels: Communication Facilitating, Adaptation-Adjustment, Communication-Inhibiting, Central Figure in Communication, Climate for Growth

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*The judges were Dr. Leonard Hawes who completed the interviewing and Patricia McCullough who worked with a different aspect of the project.

and Expansion, Coalition Formation, Responses to Conflict, Constraints, Direct and Brief Communication Orientation, Expression of Autonomy, Expression of Expectations, Externalizing, Follow Through on Commitment, Ineffective Public Communication, Ineffective Directions, Informal-Casual Communication, Expression of distrust, Personal Advancement Strategy, Power, Pressure, Request for Information, Stabilizing Forces, Timing, and Expression of Values.

The incidents included in each category were summarized and connected to the category label which provided a definition of each category. A ten item sample of the category descriptions, which will be elaborated upon in the theory development section, is listed in the appendix.

Theory Development

This section deals with the relationships among the categories, which in Glaser and Strauss' (1967) sequence are the steps of delimiting and writing theory. In addition to their guidance, the literature on systems theory and communication models were used in integrating the twenty four categories.

For Glaser and Strauss, theory development is analogous to data (category) reduction which is defined as "discovering the underlying uniformities in the original set of categories or their properties and formulating a theory with a smaller set of high level concepts. This step reduces both the terminology and the quantity of data and simultaneously elaborates upon the category system by abstracting from it" (p. 110). In achieving this abstraction, the researcher is forced to develop ideas on a level of generality higher in abstraction than the qualitative material being analyzed (p. 114). As the investigator searches for abstractions to account for clusters of categories

and develops relationships among abstractions, he is developing theory.

The movement toward data reduction through increasing abstraction creates a model of the interpersonal communication behavior of the organization via the attempt to represent that behavior in a way that gives it special meaning. Deutsch (1952) defines models as "structures of symbols and operating rules which is supposed to match a set of relevant points in an existing structure or process to be understood; that is to say, to match it completely point for point" (p. 357). Lachman (1960) confirms the representational value of models and describes their role as 'furnishing new ways of regarding or thinking about the empirical objects and events" (p. 114).

Given these definitions, the process of modeling has operated at a number of points in this study. First, making a description of the behavior in the field setting was a form of representing it. Second, the descriptions were modeled by labeling behaviors into particular categories . Now, by searching for abstract relationships among them, the categories are being modeled.

Glaser and Strauss' suggestions for searching for abstract relations among categories were suplemented by a subset of systems theory that addresses how system components are related. The original statement on this was done by Maruyama (1963) and further developed by Weick (1969). Their positions on the way sub-elements of a system affect each other are based on the following notions. (1) The elements within a system are mutual causal, i.e., the elements within a system influence

each other simultaneously or alternatingly. (2) The nature of the relationships of elements is either direct or inverse. If the relationship is direct, one element has a deviation amplifying effect on another; if the nature of the relationship is inverse, the element has a deviation counteracting effect on another. (3) The effect of deviation amplification or deviation counteraction is dependent upon the clusters of inter-connected category-variables. The process of patterning relationships among variables develops statements. In effect, the discussion that makes up the explanation of the clusters are the postulate statements developed from a portion of the variables in the system (Gibbs, 1967). Following the development of these statements as a discussion of the categories inter-relationships, it is possible to draw them out and reduce them to hypothesis form.

Combining the variables into more abstract patterns produced three clusters, The Power Advancement cluster, the Power Pressure cluster, and the Central Figure cluster. The development of one of these clusters is demonstrated here as a sample of cluster description and resulting hypotheses.

THE POWER-PRESSURE CLUSTER

The Power-Pressure cluster is a central organizational influence because it is the right of one person to define how another person will perform in certain situations. This form of Power is manifested behaviorally through the Expression of Expectations. In short, a high-power person tells a low-power person what he wants him to do.

Expressing expectations is directly related to the occurrence of Pressure

by adding to ones' burden and creating an urgency for accomplishment. The Expression of Expectations is directly related to Pressure in two ways: (1) It limits the field of alternatives the individual has to choose from in his response, and may exclude other possible correct avenues of achieving a particular end. (2) The Expression of Expectations frequently is a time benchmark which causes the pressured individual to not only have fewer approaches but also a schedule for accomplishment he considers unrealistic.

Pressure is directly related to Externalizing behavior. An individual experiencing Pressure may attribute difficulty to causes outside himself as a form of defense or self-protection. To find causal fault with an external source provides relief.

An individual may respond to pressure by placing himself outside the sphere of the pressuring source. This is accomplished by defining ones' self as a sufficient, independent entity not in need of guidance or supervision. Thus, Pressure is directly related to Expressions of Independence.

Pressure also is directly related to Adaptation-Adjustment behavior and creates changes either in the way work is done, or in individuals.

In addition to these direct relationships, there is a sub-cluster that triggers the following responses. Pressure is directly related to Requests for Information. If an individual is experiencing Pressure from another, he will ask for more definite and clearer information on what is expected of him. Requests for Information is directly related to Stabilizing Forces by providing exceptional clarity. When one has a clearer notion of what another wants, he is more able to respond to it.

His response capacity is partially determined by the Constraints that limit his that limit his responses to the pressure, which explains why Constraints are directly related to Stabilizing Forces.

The dimensions of predictability and dependability in Stabilizing Forces is directly related to the Follow Through on Commitment. Successful achievement represented in Follow Through on Commitment is inversely related to Pressure. The postulates from the Power-Pressure Cluster suggest the following testable propositions:

1. As Power is exercised, Expressions of Expectations become more numerous.

2. As Expressions of Expectations become more numerous, individuals increasingly experience Pressure.

3. As an individual (or group) increasingly is able to Follow Through on Commitments he (they) experience less Pressure.

4. As Pressure increasingly is felt, individuals are more likely to offer Expressions of Independence.

5. As Expressions of Independence become more frequent, Externalizing behavior increases.

6. As Pressure increasingly is felt, Externalizing behavior increases.

7. As Pressure increasingly is felt, the Requests for Information increase.

8. As Pressure increasingly is felt, the Adaptation-Adjustment behavior increases.

9. As the Requests for Information increase, Stabilizing Forces become more evident.

10. As the Constraints become more numerous, Stabilizing Forces become more evident.

11. As Stabilizing Forces increase, individuals (and groups) increasingly Follow Through on Commitments.

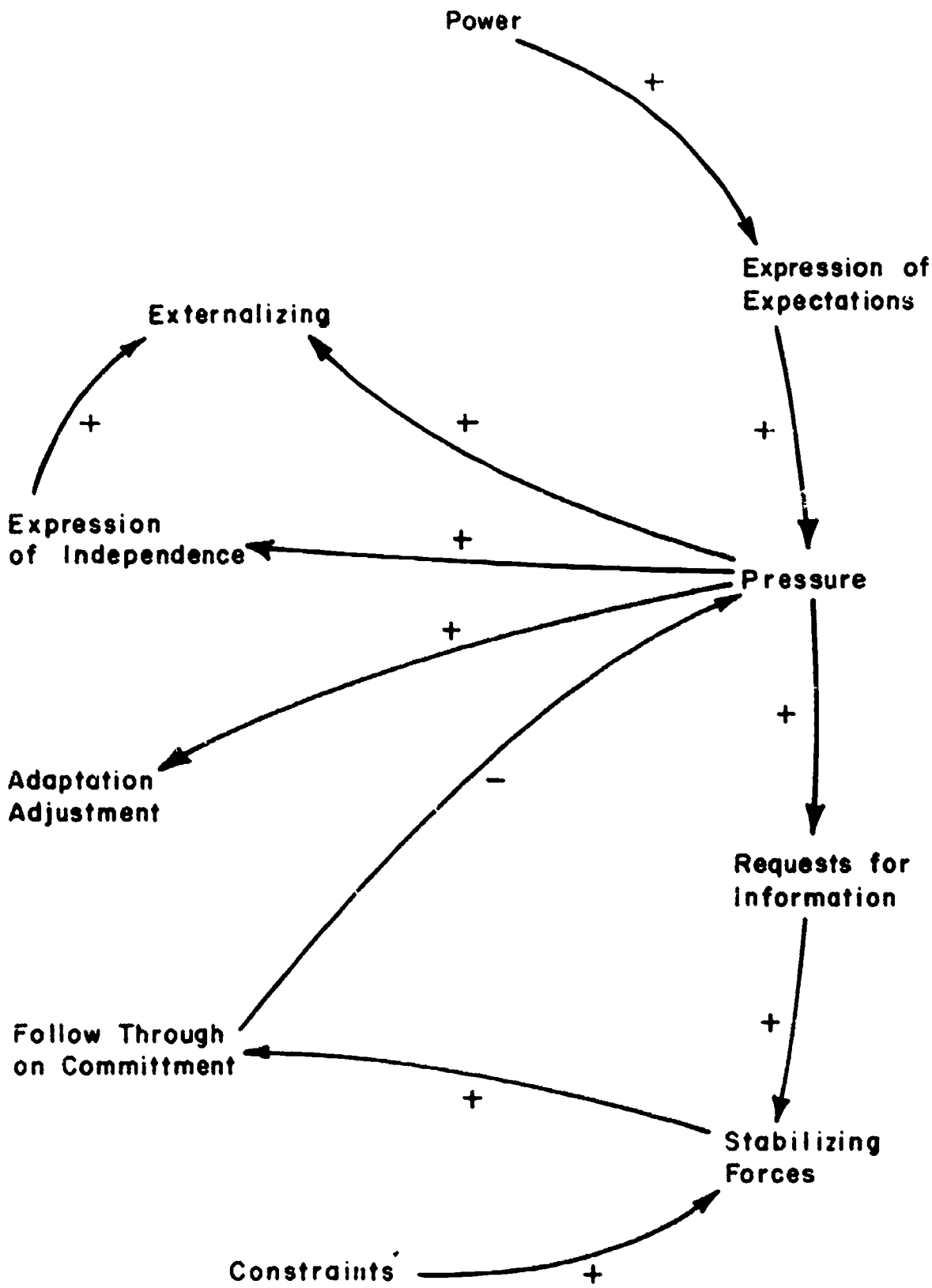

Figure 1. The Power-Pressure Cluster of Variables.
+signs indicate a direct relationship;
-signs indicate an inverse relationship

Conclusion

The hypotheses generated through the three clusters provide interesting comparasions to existing research on group and organizational communication. Some hypotheses tend to confirm existing research and this was especially true of those in the power-pressure-conflict area (Bion, 1959, Blake and Mouton, 1964, and Sherif and Sherif, 1969). Other hypotheses provide new perspectives to established research areas. For example, the Central Figure cluster included Direct and Brief Communication Orientation as a focal category. If the Central Figure in Communication is interpretable in terms of the laboratory research of communication networks, it would be possible to interject message length as a concommitant variable in centralized and decentralized network structures. Since all messages must be transmitted to the hub of a centralized network structure, the central person may give them a brief response. In an all channel-type decentralized network where there is no requirement to route messages to a particular person, a need for brevity may not exist. Hence, one could hypothesize that the average length of messages is shorter in a centralized network than in a decentralized network.

Still other hypotheses focus on variables that have not been included as significant points of concern in social science literature. Elements such as Follow Through on Commitment, Expression of Expectation, Requests for Information and Personal Advancement Strategies are novel and can be operationalized and tested more carefully in future research.

The categories and hypotheses generated in this research project are

amenable to future research in a number of directions. For the categories and hypotheses that are novel and for those that confirm previous research, additional qualitative data could add to the density of the categories and demonstrate whether they are situation specific or operate consistently in organizations with similar characteristics.

Because the categories are already sufficiently detailed to allow for their operationalization, a number of additional research steps are possible. First, the twenty-four categories could be treated as an interaction process scale in a manner similar to Bales (1950). Coding observational and interview data onto a twenty-four category scale would allow the search for relationships between individuals and categories, between categories in patterns of occurrence, and between categories and specific conditions or phases within a group or organization.

By drawing items from the category description and refining then through field testing a survey instrument could be developed for carefully testing the twenty-four variables created from this project. For both a survey instrument and a process scale, the investigator has the basic patterns of inverse and direct relationships among variables from which to work. In effect, the relationships among the variables identified in this research could be tested with these methods. Using survey research could search for relationships among variables, but not between the variable concept and the overt behavior in the organization. To account for both concerns, a mixed method of observation and survey would be necessary.

Another step in the direction of quantitative verification is to laboratory test relationships among these variables. The most obvious starting place for

a laboratory test is a selection from hypotheses derived from the cluster descriptions. The treatment of key variables in a laboratory setting drawn from data collected in a field setting would be a comprehensive treatment of a research idea that is seldom found in the social sciences.

APPENDIX

Category #1
POWER...48 Incidents...11% of total

This category codes the exercise of influence. It contains incidents relating sources of power, how power is used, and examples of the absence of power.

Sources of power include the legitimate and formal power of approval and disapproval, which in its strongest form includes the threat of firing and the rewards of advancement. It includes the power of technical competence and knowledge. It also includes a power akin to charismatic power, which is a faith or strong feeling in another's abilities. The ability to anticipate problems and future realities also is a form of power. It includes a sensitivity to problem timing, to coalitions, and to requests for information.

In these incidents, power is expended for the right to define how individuals will perform in certain situations. It gives the ability to make demands, to be directive, and to ask another to account for himself.

Incidents showing low power centered on individuals whose field of alternatives or choices were minimal. Examples of this are needing to work and being unable to find another job, having no way to obtain needed materials but through one person, and being finally responsible to see that a piece of work is done.

Category #2
EXPRESSION OF EXPECTATIONS...13 Incidents...3.2% of total

Included in this category are incidents in which individuals express how they want others to perform in future situations. These are frequently supervisors' expectations of the people who work for them, but include some employees' statements of what they want from their supervisors. In some incidents the expectations are clear, e.g., a person takes over a new job and is told what he needs to do to perform well. In other incidents the expectations occur in retrospect, "I had hoped that X would set priorities for his division." At an intense level, expectations are demands placed on others. In some instances individuals want expectations formalized, e.g., wanting guidelines for work submitted to a particular department, or wanting job descriptions clarified. When expectations are expressed by subordinates, the hopes usually focus on more help or better supervision.

Category #3
PRESSURE. .39 Incidents...9.1% of total

Incidents in this category include situations in which individuals are overburdened and feel forces to work in a hurried, urgent fashion. Pressure

in these incidents originates from two sources: people and volume of work.

Examples of pressure from people include having to make important requests from someone the subject does not know, or being coaxed by others to achieve goals, to meet deadlines, and to expedite decisions. It includes the absence of reinforcement, being asked difficult questions, and dealing with complex political problems. It includes having to oppose a powerful person, to comply with another's wishes, or to be bound by two powerful opposing forces.

The pressure produced from the volume of work clusters around a conveyer-belt analogy: having work come in spurts, having a short time period to get work completed, and having to deal with the overflow of the incomplete work generated by pressures coming to bear on another person. It includes the awkward placement of resources, a fast pace of work, too many varied things to do, surprise deadlines, and at the end of these pressures having still more work to be done.

Category #4
EXTERNALIZING...13 Incidents...3% of total

Incidents coded in this category are those in which individuals attribute forc es outside themselves as causal. A amjority of the externalizing incidents occur around problem situations, errors, individual troubles, etc. Acute examples of this category are those in which individuals place blame directly on others. Others choose to attribute problems to safer more ambigious sources that cannot be held accountable such as low salaries and organizational pressures. Externalizing messages usually are addressed to power sources not directly involved in the problem.

Category #5
EXPRESSION OF INDEPENDENCE...16 Incidents...3.8% of total

Included here are incidents which show an individual's assertion of independence, self sufficiency, and capability. Behaviors or values included are expressions of not wanting help or assistance, preferring to work alone, enjoying handling things in one's own way, and preferring not to work with close supervision. It includes ambitious behavior such as anticipating a supervisor's suggestion, following through on what seems to be needed, and working hard on a project. A special characteristic in this category is saying what is on one's mind and cutting through the organization structure by going straight to the person who can act. Such incidents were exclusively from individuals who are at lower level positions in the organization.

Category #6
ADAPTATION-ADJUSTMENT...6 Incidents...1.4% of total

Included in this category are incidents dealing with individual's actions that are deviations from established norms or procedures. Also included are incidents of individual successes and difficulties in responding to changes or new occurrences.

Examples of the former type of adaptation-adjustment include "humbling one's self to get the job done rather than insisting that rank be considered," and going directly to the person who originated the work to get errors corrected rather than following the rule of going to their boss.

The success type in this category is represented by incidents which relate an individual who finds that her secretarial skills will not support her income needs and responds by successfully becoming a data processing technician. Difficulties in adapting are exemplified by requests for "things to be clearly laid out so he knows what is expected of him." More acute examples of adaptation-adjustment occur in incidents when individuals have extreme personal difficulty arriving at a new job and by a person, who upon becoming a supervisor, begins to exhibit nervousness.

Category #7
REQUEST FOR INFORMATION...45 Incidents...10.6% of total

Incidents coded in this category are interrogative. They are not totally explainable as situations in which one individual not having information requests it of someone who does. Giving examples from this category will demonstrate the array of question-asking behavior.

First are the simple requests for information from the unknowing to the knowing. These include calls from the public that are dissiminated through the switchboard, a committee member's request for technical information from a staff person, and inquiries from one staff member to another on his specialized area of knowledge.

Demands or pressures on others are frequently formulated as requests for information: "When will the T-193 project be completed?, When will the letter of confirmation go out?, What are you going to do about the situation in your division?" This type of question can also be directed from subordinates to superiors: "When are you going to start keeping me informed about the activities in the division?"

Requests for information also can be used for the explicit purposes of evaluation. The clearest example of this is the job interview setting: "What is regression analysis?" and "What is the difference between a mean and a weighted mean?"

Requests for information are occasionally requests for approval: "Is this acceptable?" These questions are directed either at knowledgeable or

powerful individuals.

Finally, requests for information can be deliberate attempts to leave lines of communication open to others: 'Please keep me posted on what you find out. We need as many ideas and viewpoints on this decision as possible."

Category #8
STABILIZING FORCES...13 Incidents...3.1% of total

This category contains incidents pointing toward predictable forces. This context category is relatively small, but is surfaced as a contrast to the dynamics and uncertainty that characterize much of the data.

Included in this category are incidents showing that an individual has enough slack time to catch up on work. Also coded here are examples of clear and specific knowledge of what one's job includes. Other examples are promoting from within for new job openings and individuals not wanting to be promoted but liking what they are doing.

Category #9
CONSTRAINTS...49 Incidents...11.5% of total

These are incidents which emphasize the limitations of the organization. This category does not encompass all constraints but rather focuses on traits, procedures, and similar variables of a more static quality.

Included here are individual limits to performance; "look, this is all I can do in one day," a young professional sensing he is dealing with a delicate matter and asking for advice from experienced people, or an individual being offered a higher level position and deciding not to take it for lack of training. This category also includes individuals who are doing activities for which they are overqualified: using research technicians to run errands; using a stenographer to do extensive xeroxing; using a division chief to deliver payroll checks; and chiefs doing telephone work their secretaries could handle.

A large part of the space in this category is occupied by incidents of a procedural nature: having to process time sheets one and one-half days prior to the work being done resulting in a great deal of guesswork and revamping. It also includes awkward request forms, unorganized research materials, tight control procedures, and limited office space for an expanding organization.

Category #10
FOLLOW THROUGH ON COMMITMENT...15 Incidents...3.5% of total

Coded in this category are incidents dealing with achieving successful conclusions to activities or projects. The category focuses on responsiveness, closure, and getting things done.

Positive examples of such incidents include responding to a request for a specialized presentation of a slide show to a public group on short notice. In this example, individuals literally worked around the clock to get the work done. Another example is a presentation to a local community group and a feeling of a strong sense of progress at the end of the evening. It also includes going through an agenda of commitments between a director and his chief to find that all of them have been accomplished.

Incidents demonstrating a failure to get things done or letting them fall short include being given a project and having nothing completed on it three months later. A number of failures appear to be attributable to unsound or unrealistic commitments that reduce immediate tensions. These include commitment to a disgruntled secretary that she would be moved to a new position when she was critically needed in her present job, or indicating that someone would be fired soon, when that action was not a realistic alternative.

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