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ABSTRACT

This study examined the perceptions of a cohort of students, faculty, staff, and administrators concerning the vertical and horizontal flow of information at a selected university. Seventeen students, six faculty, five staff, and six administrators participated in the study. Q-methodology served as the data analytic procedure and Q-sorts were structured to include statements about upward, downward, and horizontal communication. Subjects sorted 39 cards with statements about communication into 7 piles based on a Likert-type scale according to subjects' level of agreement with the statements. A factor analysis allowed subjects to be factored across the series of test items, resulting in "clusters" of persons relative to the given construct. Results of the study indicate that most participants had similar perceptions about communication on their campus and that their communication activities and perceptions appeared to be structured according to their roles in the organization. It also appeared that most individuals stayed within their clearly defined roles in terms of communication perceptions and behavior, although a few stepped out of their roles because they were disillusioned about communication on campus. The study instruments and matrix tables are included. (Contains 19 references.) (Author/JB)

Perceptions of Communication Patterns in Higher Education

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Running Head: COMMUNICATION PERCEPTIONS

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Abstract

Communication is vital to the functioning of an organization. Individuals within organizations are not simply parts of a machine; they communicate in order to fulfill their personal and social needs as well as to perform the functions required by their roles. The purpose of the present study is to determine the perceptions that a cohort of students, faculty, staff, and administrators from a selected university have of the vertical and horizontal communication flow on their campus. Seventeen students, six faculty, five staff, and six administrators participated in the study. Q-methodology served as the data analytic procedure. Subjects sorted 39 cards with statements about communication into seven piles based on a Likert-type scale according to subjects' level of agreement with the statements. A factor analysis allowed subjects to be factored across the series of test items, resulting in 'clusters' of persons relative to the given construct. Results of the study indicate that most persons' communication activities and perceptions are structured according to their role in the organization.

PERCEPTIONS OF COMMUNICATION PATTERNS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Universities as complex organizations are uniquely structured. Unlike typical structures found in business organizations, the hierarchy is sometimes unclear, and participants in the system often find themselves fulfilling two or more roles within the organization. The roles and relationships that exist on campus constitute a unique culture. This culture is also shaped by the institution's unique purpose or mission which is generally recognized as the determinant of the operating principles for each campus. A host of both internal and external forces shape the mission: "These various forces - autonomy, multiple missions, varied technologies, professional staffing, and new sources of funding and influence - have led to what is certainly one of the least understood forms of organization in the modern world - the contemporary college and university" (Bess, 1988, p. 2). Organizational charts provide an objective view of how each institution and it's communication channels should ideally operate, but they do not necessarily reflect how messages are actually transmitted. The participants in any organization communicate to fulfill their own personal and social needs as well as to perform the functions required by their role(s).

Individuals play a part in the university organization by functioning in certain roles. These roles significantly affect communication activities and define how individuals interact with others, who communicates with whom, what protocol is used to guide interactions, and what behavior is appropriate in certain situations. When an individual's role is not clearly defined, the social rules to be followed are also unclear. Thus, in order to better understand the communication activities of all organizational

participants, organizational structure, communication expectations, and individual roles must be examined.

The Organizational Structure of Universities

Organizations may be viewed as systems where a product or service is produced by parts functioning together. In universities, the products are students and knowledge; two somewhat intangible items. Unlike most other organizations, the product is also the consumer. Another way to describe university organizations is as living systems which are born, grow, function, adapt to environmental changes, and eventually die. History, however, proves that few universities actually die; most are in constant flux in order to meet the demands placed on them. Moreover, the rapid expansion of universities due to increasing enrollment in the latter half of the Twentieth Century has increased the complexity of universities' organizational structure without the benefits of long-range planning. Andes (1970) notes that this expansion has resulted in disunity within the university, the student body and the faculty. If integration of these sectors is to occur, research must first be conducted in order to help university leaders understand the problem. Most studies of this type have involved only one factor or variable rather than focusing on the wide array of factors influencing the system as a whole (Andes, 1970). Hence, these studies have offered only minimal insight into these problems. However, social systems theory is an analytic tool that can be used to conceptually integrate the university while maintaining the integrity of the many subsystems (Andes, 1970).

Systems theory has been used to attempt to comprehensively document the inner workings of campus organization. Andes (1970) suggests that systems theory can fulfill a need of higher education:

> There needs to be developed a method of analysis of the university organization which will enable the administrator, the faculty member and the student to keep the university as a whole with its goals and objectives, and the colleges with their goals and objectives, and the departments with their goals and objectives, as well as the classes and faculty and students, all within a [single] perspective. (pp. 4-5)

Systems theory allows one to view the university as a whole made up of interacting components or social systems. These social systems develop norms and values which give cohesion to the system and to the participants within the system. Systems maintain themselves through a 'feedback' process, i.e, the system adjusts to inputs and information from the environment, and the product may be changed in regard to the feedback. For example, the relationship between faculty and students has changed over time from a highly supervised and protected '*in loco parentis*' role to one of independence for both parties. Thus, social systems theory honors the fact that the university is not unaware or unaffected by changes taking place outside its boundaries. Consequently, an analysis of relationships between university participants is central to the overall study of how complex systems function:

> It is necessary to analyze the orientation of individual faculty members, administrators and students for their behavior and attitudes are the result not only of their system setting, but are equally the result of internal orientations which they have developed through the process of growing and living. (Andes, 1970, p. 6)

The traditional bureaucratic or 'closed' theory of administration emphasized organizational charts, rationality, and efficiency. More recently, social systems theorists

have studied individuals in organizations. In breaking away from scientific management, it was recognized that individual needs of employees should be an important consideration in the administrative process. Individuals function in relation to others, not just as mechanical parts of the organization. Worker loyalty, self-esteem, security, job satisfaction, and personality are found to be directly related to productivity and motivation at work. With this revelation, communication came to be seen as a vital tool for organizations. By examining the processes of small group interaction and decision making, organizational leaders may clarify the activities and communication patterns within the university.

Within the university system, several subsystems can be identified, according to Andes (1970). The *institutional* subsystem is the component through which legal control mechanisms such as the trustees or board of regents works. The *managerial* subsystem consists of administrative and service functions. These include the president, vice presidents, deans, business managers, and other administrative personnel who mediate between the university and its environment and administer the internal affairs of the university. The managerial subsystem also mediates between faculty and students and is responsible for providing the resources needed by the technical subsystem. The *technical* subsystem is responsible for goal achievement. In the university, this would include the functions of teaching, service, and research, whose main participants are faculty and students.

Communication between these subsystems obviously needs to be two-way. In a section of their book titled *Conditions Conducive to Academic Quality*, Mayhew, Ford, and Hubbard (1990) emphasize the importance of communication: "The organization also should facilitate the essential processes of intellectual quality, as well as the

processes of sustained discourse among students, between students and faculty, and among faculty" (p. 199). Using subsystems provides a framework for understanding and predicting the behavior of university participants and for achieving an overall view of the institution while at the same time, focusing upon a single area or group. This approach allows for an enhanced understanding of the relationships within the organization between peers, superordinates, subordinates, and reference groups which so strongly affect the orientation of each university participant.

Some of the observations about university organization made by Andes (1970) include:

1. The more echelons in the managerial system the less able are upper administrators to know or understand the needs of lower participants.
2. University administrators can create the situation in which informal subsystems can develop through the location of facilities and offices.
3. The larger the student system the greater the tendency toward entropy within the student system because effective interaction takes place within subsystems of the student system.
4. The philosophical and professional orientation of university participants limits their perceptual field.
5. The more open the university to inputs and feedback from the environment the greater the development of the university.
6. The amount of effort and energy required to transmit information is increased as the size of the university increases.
7. Participation in decision making by all levels of systems reduces entropy and increases interaction and accuracy of information. (pp. 79-81)

It becomes obvious that the organizational structure of the university is closely linked to communication channels, both formal and informal. In a balanced system, there is little intergroup conflict and competition. However, the university's need to grow creates a system in dynamic flux, and so it is never at equilibrium. In light of this, it is imperative for those studying universities as organizations to examine the social systems at work within universities. A look at some of the popular theories of university organization and administration will provide insight into the structure and administration of these institutions.

Theories of Organization and Administration

Bess (1988) discusses four prevailing theories of organization and administration in colleges and universities. These are the bureaucratic, collegial, political, and organized anarchy models. Each theory carries with it certain assumptions about the role of individuals and communication channels within the organization. A brief overview of each of these models follows.

Bureaucratic Model

The bureaucratic model is based upon the work of Max Weber and other proponents of scientific management:

> The guiding principle here is that human beings can be programmed in the same way as machines through a careful analysis and planning of job design and organizational structure. Moreover, workers will be content in positions in which they see themselves as legitimately placed by virtue of expertise and career. The processes of decision making in this model are decentralized to persons at the lowest possible organizational levels appropriate to the type of decision, with recourse to persons in positions

at upper levels when insufficient expertise exists below. (Bess, 1988, p. 3)

Scientific management was designed to increase productivity from human labor for business and industry. Greater efficiency was the goal of most organizations, and research was centered on management practices. The human element was not considered to be central to the product oriented business. Over time, however, the emphasis in most organizations has shifted to a more collegial approach.

Collegial Model

The collegial model places individuals above the organization in terms of priority of attention. Individuals can be committed to organizational goals if the material and personal rewards are sufficient. One of these rewards may be participative management or shared decision making. In this climate, it is hoped, individuals will find security and satisfaction. Group loyalty will result, and maximum production will be more likely to be obtained. It is clear in this model that good human relations in an organization are essential to effective and efficient production and meeting individual needs.

Political Model

The political model is based on the idea of inevitable and irreconcilable differences among organizational participants. This model suggests that problems develop because the division of labor constrains workers to subunits, rather than to the organization as a whole. There are subsequently breakdowns in communication which result in conflict within and between groups. Resolving these conflicts takes the form of bargaining and politics. This view is in contrast to the notion of rational or participative decision making as the major means for solving problems. The political model recognizes no organized decision making structure, but considers decision making as a process under the assumptions of conflict. The political model might be a good fit in the

university setting where there are distinct groups and intense competition for funds.

Organized Anarchy Model

Cohen and March's (1974) organized anarchy looks at structure and process in organizations. The idea that organizations are anarchic came about through the frustrations of organizational behaviorists who were unable to establish rules of cause and effect relationships among behavior occurring in organizations. This thinking was also influenced by Weick's (1976) introduction of universities as 'loosely coupled' systems. Organizational norms, values, goals, and hidden agendas, apparently have a great effect on relationships and behavior within the organization.

In addition to these structural models, several models of decision-making exist. These models, although not directly aligned with the structural models, may be more or less suited to different organizations. Hardy (1990) lists the four prominent models as collegiality, political decision-making, the garbage can, and the rational/bureaucratic model. In each of these, individual roles of students, faculty, and administrators would differ, and thus, the focus and scope of communication activities in each of these settings would be vastly different.

A final 'Alternative Theory' has recently been proposed as a new and useful framework for the study of organizations, particularly educational settings. T. B. Greenfield (1985) is a leading critic of the systems perspective. He asserts that participants in an organization are creative, unpredictable individuals whose behavior can neither be constrained nor satisfactorily explained by general theories (Johnson, 1990). Greenfield contends that organizations can be studied more accurately if we conceive of them as invented reality, where structures are created by members' perceptions and behavior. Hierarchical power exists only in individual minds, and people can withdraw

their consent at any time and dissolve administrative control. Johnson (1990) does not see Greenfield's conception of organizations as a satisfactory substitute for existing educational administration theory:

> [Greenfield] highlights the distinctiveness, the humanness, the unpredictability of social behavior. Yet from diverse and ungeneralizable social interaction and individual perceptions and values no substantive theory of organizational behavior emerges as an alternative. Indeed this development seems to preclude the development of a theory of organization at all. (Johnson, 1990, p. 35)

Johnson also emphasizes sociological and anthropological research which has shown, based on organizational members' shared sense of reality and group social structure, that organizational behavior is structured, regular, observable and predictable.

Greenfield's perspective is intriguing in that it challenges the foundations of traditional organizational research. It is important to consider that individuals are powerful forces within an organization. Consequently, Greenfield's proposition directly confronts the issue of the present study: Do individual differences (i.e., roles) contribute to communication styles of participants in organizations?

Rules Theory And Individual Roles

Littlejohn (1992) notes that individuals are governed by rules, and that it is these rules which form social and cultural reality. Communication is not random, but guided by rules. These rules are formed in the process of interacting, and in turn, guide the interaction itself. Three approaches to rules theory are:

> The first *rule following*, treats rules as structurally embedded in language and social life. In the rule-following tradition, rules almost have the force of laws in that people have very little choice about whether to follow them. Rules of grammar are an example.
>
> The other two traditions, the *rule-governed* and the *rule using* approaches, give individuals much more latitude to create, use and even reject rules. Here, rules are viewed as conventions that are established as part of the social construction of reality. Rule-governed approaches see rules as guides that can be and are violated. Rule-using approaches suggest that actors have a variety of rules available in a situation and choose those they believe most appropriate to accomplish their goals. (Littlejohn, 1992, p. 198)

In the process of communication and following rules, relationships form naturally between members of an organization. Networks are social structures created through these contacts. These networks, or communication channels, become central to the functioning of the system. Networks in an organization serve as the channels through which influence and power are exerted both formally and informally and information is exchanged (Littlejohn, 1992).

It appears that rules do exist, but some individuals have the power to reject or selectively use them. This power may arise from several variables, including an individual's role in the organization. When roles are set, people are understood in terms of these roles and are expected to behave in certain ways. "Roles constitute and express social organization. Seeing that an individual is performing a role (or roles) allows us to make some sense of his or her actions and to detect the framing effects of a social

organization" (Montgomery & Duck, 1991, p. 61).

In any organization, many different people are working toward a common goal or interest, but there also exists a wide range of competing and conflicting personal interests. In a university, the common interest is clearly defined through the university's mission statement, and although these statements vary slightly across institutions, it is generally agreed that the major components of a university's mission are teaching, research, and service. Bess (1988) notes that role definition in higher education is exemplary in its looseness. This may be a source of satisfaction as well as frustration, especially for faculty. "If individual roles, then, are broadly delineated, role expectations must be understood as a combination of very general formal institutional requirements and an informal and still fairly loose specification emerging out of system-wide and local norms" (Bess, 1988, p. 105). The 'actors' or 'role players' in higher education consist of four distinct groups working toward the mission: students, faculty, staff, and administrators. A brief description of each of these roles follows.

Student Role

Unlike faculty, staff, or administrators, students do not receive a job description when they first step foot on campus. Their role is defined internally by past educational experiences, present expectations, a brief orientation, peer models, and limited statements from faculty of their expectations of students. In the past, students were treated like children; they were expected to live by strictly enforced rules in and outside of the classroom. They were spoon-fed information which was dictated by a prescribed, inflexible curriculum. The student role has changed drastically because "American higher education came to embrace the concept that students should be free of

administrative or faculty supervision of their academic and social affairs" (Delworth & Hanson, 1989, p. 20). Students are now considered adults, and thus, responsible for their own actions.

Research studies have consistently shown that the greater the involvement of students in college life, particularly regarding their interactions with instructors, the greater their personal growth, satisfaction with college, and persistence in college will be (Friedlander & MacDougall, 1992). Some colleges are attempting to allow students to play a more significant role in governance in order to create an educational program more relevant to the students' needs. Communication plays a key role in the personal and intellectual development of students' view of themselves as persons. As Pascarella and Terenzini have noted:

> The self is not defined in isolation but at least partially by one's interactions with others. Perceptions of self and beliefs about others' perceptions of oneself shape not only individuals' internal, psychological structures but also their responses to and interactions with their external social world. (1991, p. 223)

Faculty Role

The faculty role is defined more clearly in terms of fulfilling the mission of the institution. Bess notes that "a typical faculty role might include teaching, research, and work on the academic senate or its committees. The faculty role thus refers not only to individual and collective decision making, but also to the patterns of relationships and interactions among colleagues as they perform their line/task functions" (1988, p. 104). Because of their centrality to the academic mission, faculty must communicate with all other groups on campus. Their relationships with students are of significant influence

considering the legitimate power delegated to faculty by the institutional hierarchy:

> Power, like knowledge, is a social construct; and like all social constructs, it is not static. Although it is certainly true that learners and teachers have different roles and levels of power (and thus different kinds of authority), it is a basic tenet of collaborative education that everyone concerned is both a learner and a teacher. (Romer & Whipple, 1991, p. 66)

Faculty's role in administrative matters will vary from institution to institution, but faculty are likely to be involved in appointments, promotions, and salaries of other faculty members. Moreover, faculty are often responsible for decisions regarding curriculum, the admission and evaluation of students, institutional planning and budgeting (Furniss, 1973). Nevertheless, it is clear that the role of faculty members is in a constant state of flux and transformation. The role of faculty has evolved with changes in higher education:

> Effectively excluded from policy-making both by organizational structure and by lack of unity and interest, faculty generally are ambivalent toward the administrators who not only "manage" them on behalf of the governing authority but also protect them from outside pressures and obtain necessary resources. Faculty attitudes toward students also have become increasingly ambivalent as the faculty member's role has changed from partner in paternalism to individual entrepreneur. (Delworth & Hanson, 1989, p. 19)

Staff Role

Staff members in institutions of higher education are conspicuously absent from much of the literature in this field. They are largely seen as actors in the university's support services, and therefore are not perceived to be central to the university's academic mission. Although there have been institutional efforts to include faculty and students in administrative decision-making, staff are rarely mentioned. Since status in an organization is connected to decision-making power, and also to educational attainment, staff appear at the bottom of the status hierarchy.

To function in their support roles, staff members must communicate with faculty and administrators, and to a lesser extent, students. In light of the organizational chart, staff will likely be more involved as receivers of communication than as senders. Hence, in a top-down communication network, staff will not have an important role in the hierarchy.

Administrator Role

Administrators play a vital and often misunderstood role in higher education. Their function is essentially to coordinate the activities of students and faculty and lead the entire institution toward fulfillment of the mission. Their role is perhaps the most clearly defined. Litchfield (1971) describes the administrative process as a cycle of actions composed of decision making, programming, communication, control, and reappraisal. He adds that there are three things an administrator actually does; prepare policy, manage resources, and execute policy (Litchfield, 1971, p. 153). Administration has also been viewed as a process of problem solving and decision making.

These four roles in higher education are clearly separate, but not mutually exclusive. Although administrators have specific job descriptions, students have less

standardized role expectations.

PURPOSE

The main purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions each of the aforementioned groups (students, faculty, staff, and administrators) has of the upward and downward flow of communication (vertical channels) and the flow of communication between peers (horizontal channels). In addition, the question of whether perceived communication patterns are accounted for by individual differences or roles was addressed.

INSTRUMENTATION

This study was partially a replication of Joan Aitken and Rodger Palmer's 1988 study titled *Selecting a Q Sample: A study of Communication Types Among Students, Faculty, and Administrators in Higher Education.* The same set of 39 statements regarding communication in a higher education institution was utilized. This set is titled *The College Communication Questionnaire*. The statements were originally selected so that they related specifically to each group of faculty, students, and administrators, as well as a fourth group of more generalized statements. The authors also attempted to structure the Q-sorts to include statements about upward, downward, and horizontal communication (Aitken & Palmer, 1988). A complete copy of the 39 items is provided in Appendix A.

METHOD

The instrument was administered to 17 graduate education students enrolled in a curriculum development class during summer session at a comprehensive university in the southern United States. In addition, six faculty, five staff, and six administrators at the same institution later completed the Q-sort. A total of 34 subjects participated in the

present study.

Q-sort technique was developed in 1935 by William Stephenson and Sir G. H. Thomson (Stephenson, 1935). Q-methodology emerged as a form of factor analysis after Stephenson suggested that an investigator could correlate any facet of measurement across another. Hence, a researcher can facotr persons rather than their test results, for example (Brooks, 1970). It is important to distinguish between "Q-sort technique" and "Q-methodology". Q-sort technique is the card-sorting procedure used to gather subjects' responses. Q-methodology, however, is more comprehensive and includes correlation of persons based on card-sorting responses, a specialized use of questionnaire items, forced responses, and factor analysis (Brooks, 1970).

This technique is ideal for studying persons because the individual provides his or her own frame of reference, also called an internal frame of reference. Q-method is often used in attitude studies because it is an objective, organized method for studying many aspects of a person's attitudes and behavior. It is a method of categorizing people based on common responses. Carr (1992) notes that:

> Q-technique has been used to investigate clusterings of people based on variables such as attitudes, preferences, and thinking behaviors. With Q-technique factor analysis it is possible to obtain factors that can be thought of as idealized "types" of persons. (Carr, 1992, p. 137)

Subjects were given an instruction sheet, oral instructions, and a package of 39 cards on which the statements were printed. Subjects were asked to sort the cards into seven piles on a Likert-type scale which was illustrated on the instruction sheet (See Appendix B). The piles ranged from strongly disagree on their left-hand side to strongly agree on their right-hand side. Since the researcher employed a 'forced sort' technique,

each pile could contain only a specified number of cards, and these numbers were included on the instruction sheet. Subjects proceeded to sort the cards and then recorded the card numbers on the instruction sheet below the appropriate pile symbol. The completed instruction sheets were identified only by the category of student, faculty, staff, or administrator.

Once the data were collected, the researcher assigned a value of "1" to items in the left pile (strongly disagree), a value of "2" to the items sorted into the next pile to the right, and so forth. The 'forced sort' procedure instructed subjects to place two cards in the left pile which was strongly disagree, four cards in the next pile, eight cards in the next pile, 11 cards in the neutral pile, eight cards in the next pile, four cards in the next pile, and two cards in the far right pile, which was strongly agree. With a forced sort technique, the experimenter specifies the shape and scatter of the distribution curve. In the present case, the respondent's ratings of the items resulted in a quasi-normal distribution.

RESULTS

Data were analyzed using the SPSSX FACTOR procedure and a "transposed" raw data matrix, i.e., persons defined the columns and variables defined the rows of the matrix. Factors were extracted using the principal components method, and results were rotated to the varimax criterion. Four factors were extracted based on a visual 'scree' test. Person factors were determined based on a minimum factor-structure coefficient criterion of |.44|. The resulting factor matrix is presented in Table 1. Factor scores for the items are presented in Table 2.

Analysis of Factors

Factor I

Of the 17 persons in the student group, 14 were highly correlated with Factor I. Hence, it was felt that this factor represented students. Of the remaining three students, two were correlated with Factor IV, and one person was not highly correlated with any of the four factors. Two persons who were highly correlated with Factor I were also highly correlated with other Factors (III & IV). Consulting the Table 2 factor scores for each item, it is apparent that persons in Factor I positively identified with statements 1, 25, and 31. They responded negatively to statements 2, 3, 21, 36, and 38. An analysis of these items indicates that students apparently feel that communication between themselves and other students and between students and faculty is effective on this campus.

Factor II

Of the six persons in the administrator group, five were highly correlated with Factor II, and one was correlated with Factor III. Thus, Factor II was identified as a cluster of administrators. Interestingly, one of the five persons in this cluster was highly correlated with both Factor II and Factor III. Consulting factor scores for each item, persons in Factor II positively rated statements 3, 7, 13, 18, 31, and 32. They responded negatively to statements 2, 8, 9, 14, 26, 30, and 33. These item ratings suggest that administrators feel that they are in touch with communication and decision-making on campus, but there are communication problems between students and other groups.

Factor III

Of the six persons in the faculty group, five were highly correlated with Factor III, and one was correlated with Factor IV. Consequently, this factor was deemed as a faculty cluster. Two persons who were correlated with Factor III were also correlated

with other factors (IV & II). Persons in Factor III gave higher than average ratings to items 2, 6, 15, 17, and 25. They responded more negatively to statements 1, 5, 10, 13, 21, 36, and 38. Based on the content of these items, faculty seem to feel that they are involved with and informed of decision making on campus. They perceive good communication exists among students and between faculty and students.

Factor IV

Factor IV included a mixed cluster of faculty, staff, and students. Three of the five staff persons were in this group. One of these staff members correlated more highly with Factor I (this person is also a part-time student) and one correlated more highly with Factor II (this person is a long-term staff member). Factor IV also included three students and two faculty members, but interestingly, no administrators. Persons in Factor IV positively rated statements 5, 15, 24, 26, 27, 32, and 34. They responded more negatively to statements 3, 6, 8, 20, 30, and 33. Considering the content of these items, these persons feel ignored and out of touch with communication on this campus. They rely more on written forms of communication than verbal interaction. They seem to be alienated by the bureaucracy. Hence, this cluster might be identified as a disillusioned cohort of respondents relative to their perceptions of institutional communication patterns.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study suggest that, for the most part, each group of students, faculty, staff, and administrators have similar perceptions about communication on their campus. Since four distinct clusters of individuals were identified using Q-methodology, this procedure appears to be an accurate measure of perceptions of communication within groups. Specific remarks regarding subjects' perceptions of vertical and horizontal

communication as well as a discussion of the similarity of findings of the present study to the previous study by Aitken and Palmer follow.

The first three items in the Q-sort (I am a student, I am a faculty member, I am an administrator) were incidentally validity checks for the subjects' answers. For most subjects, these statements clearly identified the group to which the respondents belonged, and hence, the role they see themselves playing in campus situations. However, some persons identified themselves as fulfilling more than one role; for example, three administrators are also part-time faculty members, two staff members are also part-time students, and, from a philosophical perspective, some faculty saw themselves as students because they are constantly discovering new knowledge in their faculty role. If perceived roles guide a persons' communication activities, those in dual roles might experience role conflict or confusion when communicating.

A look at vertical communication channels at this institution indicates that all groups felt the best way to communicate with the President was through written communication. All groups except students felt that the Board of Trustees is out of touch with campus attitudes and activities. Administrators seem to feel that faculty are less communicative than the other groups perceived them to be, but faculty did not have strong opinions about administrators' communication. All groups agreed that communication with students is not difficult; however, persons in both the administrator and the disillusioned clusters felt that most students do not fully understand university policy. This implies that students are expected to more actively seek out information or else that they should be given more information. Communication between faculty and students was seen by faculty and students as being good, and students strongly agreed that faculty were the best source of information about class policy.

An examination of perceptions about horizontal communication suggests that administrators do not find it difficult to communicate with other administrators on this campus. Students do not perceive a lot of student cliques to exist on the campus, and they feel comfortable communicating with each other. Faculty perceived students to have excellent horizontal communication interaction. While administrators perceived a tendency toward exclusively in-group communication for faculty, students and faculty disagreed, perceiving that faculty communicate with other groups on campus as well. Overall, horizontal communication appears to work well on this campus.

The disillusioned group is intriguing because it contains a mixture of students, faculty, and staff, but no administrators. This group feels that their opinions are ignored and do not count at this university. They also perceive others to be either confused or non-communicative, and feel that communication should be improved between all groups on campus. They are apparently frustrated with the hierarchy and decision-making, and prefer the handbook as a source of information. The disillusioned group most closely related to Aitken and Palmer's (1988) "Overloaded Type" who do not feel in control, have little communication competence, and feel that the university doesn't care about their ideas. The difference is that Aitken and Palmer's study identified faculty as the predominant group in this category, whereas the present study found mostly staff in this group.

The "Looking Upward Type," according to Aitken and Palmer's study, contained mostly students. This group is self-confident, feels influential, takes control of situations, is not intimidated by superiors, and can communicate upward and horizontally, but not downward. These descriptors fit the student group in the present study; however, in the student role, there is no opportunity for downward communication unless one perceives

staff or other students to be below students on the hierarchy of higher education.

The "Outgoing Type," as described by Aitken and Palmer, contained mostly faculty. The typical persons in this group are self-confident and in control. They feel their opinions count, and they can communicate in all directions - upward, downward, and horizontally. In the present study the faculty cluster is similar to this outgoing prototype; however, subjects in the present study's faculty cluster disagreed with the statement "The best source of information on this campus is other people like me." This indicates perhaps that these persons do not think downward channels are effective or that they personally do not seek out information.

The "Fantasy Type" is the last category described by Aitken and Palmer. Administrators were the predominant group in this category in their study. This type feels that the university is working well, that his or her opinions count, and that communication in this organization is generally effective. Administrators in the present study seemed to have a more realistic perspective of their campus, and may not necessarily fit into the "Fantasy Type." For example, they did not agree that there is good communication between all groups on campus. They felt that most students do not fully understand university policy, and that the Board of Trustees is not in touch with what goes on on campus. Although these administrators were well informed and communicative, they recognized some problem areas in the structure of other communication channels.

It appears from the results of this study that individuals for the most part stayed within their clearly defined roles in terms of communication perceptions and behavior. This finding supports theoretical conceptions of organizations regarding individuals fulfilling specific roles and behaving in accordance to their role expectations. However,

several individuals in this study stepped out of their roles because they are disillusioned about communication on campus. They have different perceptions from the rest of their group. The fact that there were only a few disillusioned individuals does not support theories which assert that the organizational structure and hierarchy have no effect on individuals.

Most of the subjects in this study seem to be rule following institutional participants, particularly administrators who stayed within their roles; however, the disillusioned group appears to be more inclined to a rule using strategy. The disillusioned group could possibly be seen as those who were more influenced by individual perceptions than they were by their given role expectations.

The results of the present study suggest several questions worthy of future research. First, do individuals with dual (or more) roles in organizations experience role-conflict when communicating? If so, is this due to different perceptual sets, or do they perceive events the same regardless of the role they are in? Secondly, do participants structure their communication style to fit certain roles? The disillusioned group in particular is of interest, since this group contains faculty, staff and students, but no administrators. Perhaps administrators are more constrained by their roles than other groups. Hence, a third question worthy of investigation would be: Is role constraint then related to position on the hierarchy? Fourth, some questions about the disillusioned group emerge, including: Why are they disillusioned? Do they feel they can improve the situation? Which group has a more accurate perception of the real situation? Finally, does a 'real situation' exist in terms of communication on campus, or are participant perceptions the only 'reality' that researchers need to examine?

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Appendix A

The College Communication Questionnaire

1. I am a student.
2. I am a faculty member.
3. I am an administrator.
4. If there is a problem or question I can go directly to the source.
5. I feel my opinions are ignored.
6. I feel that my opinions count at this university.
7. If I wanted to, I would feel free to call the president of the university.
8. The Board of Curators/Trustees are in touch with what's going on here.
9. I find it difficult to communicate with administrators.
10. Students seldom talk much to other students on this campus.
11. There is little communication between administrators and other administrators.
12. University staff are an important part of campus policy-making.
13. The best source of information on this campus is other people like me.
14. If I don't know about a university policy or procedure I'd be lucky to find out.
15. The handbook is the best source of information about university policies.
16. Parents of students have easy access to administrators on this campus.
17. The best place to find information about degree requirements is from student advisors.
18. I can communicate comfortably with administrators at this school.
19. Students and faculty rarely communicate outside of class.
20. Administrators are in touch with what is happening in the classroom.
21. I find communicating with students to be difficult.
22. For the most part there is little communication on campus.
23. I feel that I can easily influence others on campus.

24. The bureaucracy at this school makes it difficult to communicate with superiors.
25. The best place to find information about class policy is from faculty.
26. I feel really isolated from sources of information and decision-making on this campus.
27. If I really want to find out what is happening, I talk to a secretary.
28. There seems to be a lot of cliques on this campus.
29. Most administrators on this campus have an open door policy and are easy to talk to.
30. There is good communication between all groups on campus.
31. I feel I am able to talk to superiors when ever I want to.
32. The best way to communicate with the school President or Chancellor is by writing a letter.
33. I find that most students fully understand university policy.
34. Everyone here is concerned about their own problems, they aren't interested in other areas of the university.
35. Students rarely have an opportunity to talk to administrators.
36. I perceive the communication between faculty and students as being distant.
37. I feel it is difficult for faculty to communicate with administrators.
38. The only people faculty talk to are other faculty.
39. The campus paper flow is overwhelming.

Appendix B

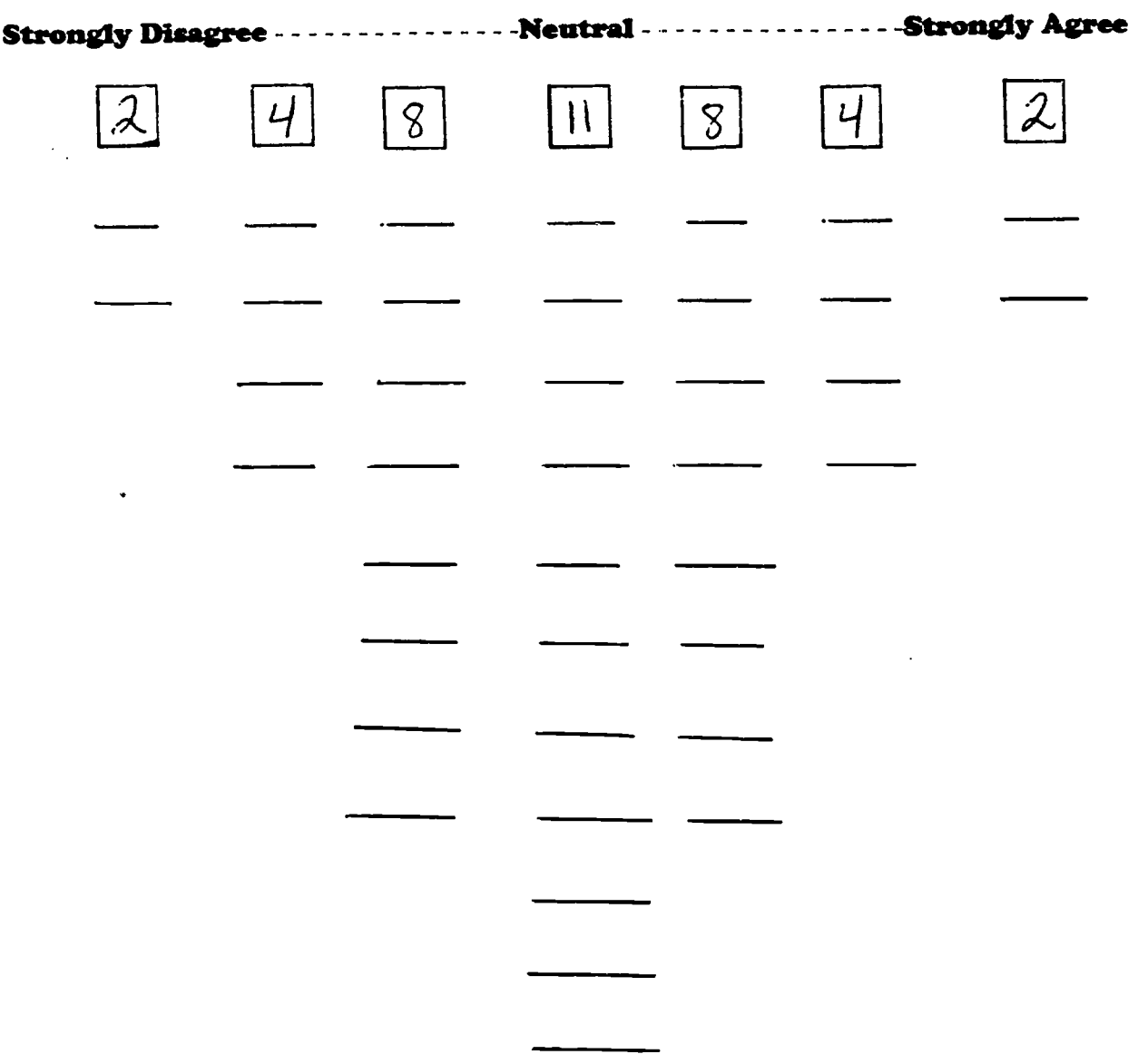
I.D. _____

Circle One: Student Faculty Staff Administrator

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Arrange cards into 7 piles as shown below. The number of cards you are allowed to put in each pile is indicated in the box.

2. Write the card numbers below the appropriate box on this sheet.



Thank you for your help!

Table 1

Rotated Factor Matrix

	FACTOR I	FACTOR II	FACTOR III	FACTOR IV
PERSON1	.61694	.07274	.45523	-.16240
PERSON2	.15107	.03744	.13458	.55300
PERSON3	.27399	-.05624	-.28143	.52136
PERSON4	.73500	.02943	-.11229	.19286
PERSON5	.79710	-.01783	.12064	-.16391
PERSON6	.69331	.15839	-.06060	.37500
PERSON7	.58036	.09379	-.06708	.48201
PERSON8	.51834	.12857	.17899	.31937
PERSON9	.76982	.08121	-.06635	.14502
PERSON10	.59694	.30144	.12725	-.42760
PERSON11	-.63902	.25448	-.03508	-.30003
PERSON12	.86507	.03824	.04879	-.17735
PERSON13	.85515	.13099	.04595	-.06687
PERSON14	.66888	.06664	-.37980	.13339
PERSON15	.50344	.06852	-.23265	.36434
PERSON16	.59057	-.28058	-.10079	.25532
PERSON17	.28493	.10733	.01479	.09221
PERSON18	-.23605	.14586	.37966	.53742
PERSON19	.02466	-.17115	.47942	.56681
PERSON20	.18936	.36528	.66377	.15903
PERSON21	.02459	-.00697	.75202	-.11706
PERSON22	-.03813	-.04167	.72693	.23178
PERSON23	-.04115	.49783	.57080	-.23603
PERSON24	.07382	.28746	-.11574	.41550
PERSON25	.40526	.01115	-.35322	.35296
PERSON26	-.02270	.73725	.01293	.17326
PERSON27	-.01574	-.17052	.00579	.46180
PERSON28	.21086	.07620	.00391	.44842
PERSON29	-.16045	.61834	.57756	.08661
PERSON30	.01219	.66068	.10352	.13645
PERSON31	.05412	.84605	.18161	.02010
PERSON32	.18207	.77452	.01711	-.22334
PERSON33	-.01289	.23260	.46481	-.01648
PERSON34	.38526	.74158	.04853	-.18498

Table 2

Factor Scores for Items 1-39

	SCORES1	SCORES2	SCORES3	SCORES4
1	3.00188	-.78724	-1.41175	-.25336
2	-2.46899	-1.31453	3.34793	.34435
3	-2.20715	2.61405	.57263	-1.57823
4	.95991	.84494	.41392	-.89649
5	-.38528	-.07924	-1.22635	1.74686
6	-.04808	.33956	1.11529	-1.98181
7	.36718	1.26714	.31289	-.57513
8	.33211	-1.56387	-.29830	-1.47411
9	-.59877	-1.44878	-.00770	.47512
10	-.99694	.02034	-2.02623	-.70441
11	-.14071	.11535	-.40638	-.08583
12	.30830	-.60761	.88597	-.19233
13	.24855	1.45829	-1.12609	.84043
14	-.59471	-1.14263	-.27509	.49677
15	.94435	-.99745	1.41979	1.35466
16	.09951	.49990	.22886	.37216
17	.72420	-.77540	1.00564	.33639
18	.75765	1.38795	.73285	-.86984
19	-.79761	-.53467	-.45363	-.17452
20	.01010	-.64886	-.50365	-1.19518
21	-1.07900	-.99759	-1.98750	-.95958
22	-.80705	-.86897	.16961	.29987
23	-.42362	.96041	-.06102	-.44638
24	-.55583	-.05654	.58851	1.21003
25	1.44956	-.00166	1.24907	.05812
26	.34193	-1.19811	-.20042	1.34983
27	.85165	.20999	-.36991	1.19863
28	-.34498	.46061	.06049	.87157
29	.66582	.61056	.10039	-.90879
30	.27094	-1.24503	-.61567	-1.18798
31	1.28339	1.28735	.68122	-.40460
32	.79262	1.26928	.41636	1.69804
33	.24798	-1.53404	.03960	-1.98658
34	-.45367	.66353	-.65499	1.36671
35	-.29854	.14879	-.19194	.79758
36	-1.10170	.24121	-1.14378	.48111
37	-.15044	-.07056	.48977	.47012
38	-1.20061	.82471	-1.27133	.30772
39	.99602	.64880	.40095	-.20092