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*A unified theory of organizational communication is presented which explains the variety of communication behaviors with which organizations must deal, including internal communication, internal-external communication, and interorganizational communication. The theory is developed from the concepts of system openness, structural constraints, and synchronic and diachronic communication. Application of the theory is demonstrated with data from five separate studies of employee communications, communication with consumers, organization-clientele communication in a community development agency, total organizational communication, and communication between organized interest groups.*

# **A MULTI-SYSTEMS THEORY OF ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION**

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Organizational communication is an area of research that fits well with Schramm's (1973a) analogy for the state of communication research a few years ago. Organizational communication is much like the oasis in the middle of the desert through which many travelers pass, but in which few linger long enough to meet one another.

Classical management theorists lingered in the oasis only long enough to point out that communication should flow downward in an organization and that commands should be clear and presented preferably in written form so that subordinates would have little difficulty understanding management wishes. Human relations theorists tasted the water in the oasis (communication) and liked it so much that they ran off to extol its virtues to

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every manager in sight without bothering to develop a theory that would be useful to managers.

Perrow (1970), Etzioni (1964), Hall (1972), and others have pointed out that a sociological or structural approach to organizations is a more fruitful approach than either the classical management or human relations approach. According to Perrow, the structural school combines the scientific management and human relations approaches, placing primary emphasis on organizational variables such as technology, centralization, and formalization, but yet examining the impact of structure on human behavior in the organization. The structural approach differs from human relations, however, in that structure is considered the cause of individual behavior in an organization, not the other way around.

Hall (1972: 291) describes a structural approach to organizational communications as follows:

the communications system is vitally affected by other structural and processual factors. Communications do not exist outside the total organizational framework. . . . More and more accurate communications do not lead inevitably to greater effectiveness for the organization. The key to the communication process in organizations is to ensure that the correct people get the correct information (in amount and quality) at the correct time.

Most structuralists, however, devote little attention to communication and do not have a theory which explains why the correct people sometimes communicate and get the correct information and other times they do not. When structuralists do examine communication, they, like members of the other schools, view communication as a means for disseminating information from management to subordinates. Seldom do they try to explain communication as behavior, a behavior of individuals within organizations and of organizations within an environment (see also Cyert and March, 1963, who formulate a theory of organizational information search).

These theorists, however, generally overlook the fact that organizations have a variety of roles which are filled by

professional communicators, professionals whose role is to mediate between subsystems or between the organization and external systems. These roles include public relations, employee relations, labor relations, marketing and advertising, information retrieval, and others, depending on particular titles in different organizations.

Existing "theories" of organizational communication are of little use to these professionals because the theories are generally descriptive (e.g., they tell how information flows through an organization) or simply predictive (e.g., researchers have found that upward communication will be biased in favor of the superior's expectations). Seldom is such theory explanatory. Most organizational communication theory falls into the category of what Brown (1963) calls empirical generalizations rather than theory, because it leaves unanswered the question of *why* the empirical generalization occurs. The "why" question perhaps can always be asked of any theory, but Brown says that as the answer becomes more and more abstract, the theory becomes more useful.

Existing theories also pay more attention to the information-dissemination function of communication than to the information-acquisition function—e.g., downward internal communication gets more attention than upward communication (Smith, Richetto and Zima, 1972: 279; Redding, 1966: 47-82). Since management generally finances research into organizational communication, the resulting theories have been more useful for managers wishing to manipulate than for professional communicators wishing to mediate. The theories may help management to diffuse an "innovation," but do little to help it seek an innovation.

This article will present a theory of organizational communication that will explain organizational communication as one aspect of organizational behavior. Communication will not be conceptualized as a natural process which occurs according to natural laws, but as an artificial procedure which individuals and systems design to bridge gaps in the system (Carter, 1973; Simon, 1969). Communication will be viewed as behavior which

systems use to reduce uncertainty in problematic situations (Grunig, 1966) in order to gain a more accurate picture of the environment with which they must cope.

To a large extent, the structure of an organization defines the problematic situation for individuals within the organization. It also determines the organization's flexibility and responsiveness to information inputs from the environment. Therefore, organizational structure will be conceptualized here as the most important concept explaining why individuals in organizations and organizations themselves communicate.

To be useful to professional communicators, this theory also must distinguish between organizational communication as a set of procedures for mediating between systems rather than as a set of procedures which one system uses to control another. The difference can be seen clearly in terms of Thayer's (1968: 129-130) synchronic and diachronic modes of communication. In the synchronic mode one of the participants in the communicative encounter attempts to "synchronize" the psychological state of the other with his own. In the diachronic mode, however, the purpose of the communicative encounter is a "joint or cooperative effort to achieve *whatever* result comes from the encounter."

There are many types of organizational communication. Individuals communicate with peers, superiors, and subordinates within the organization. Managers manage through communication. Employee communication departments attempt to inform and/or secure "cooperation" from employees. Labor relations specialists deal with labor unions. Formal and informal communication takes place between departments and role occupants throughout the organization. Public relations specialists communicate to external audiences about the organization in general, and advertising departments communicate to consumers about the organization's products and services. "Change agents" and other organizational representatives communicate with clients and community representatives. Finally, organizations communicate with other organizations which generally share common problems or values.

At present, different theories—or, more accurately, different prescriptive rules-of-thumb—can be found in the organizational literature for each type of communication. Similarly, the professional communicators handling each of these different communication problems come from different disciplines and have little in common other than the vague goal of facilitating “organizational communications.”

General systems theory, however, encourages theorists to use the same concepts to explain the behavior of different types of systems, systems which range from individuals to small groups, organizations, communities, and large social systems. The theory to be developed here will be used to direct research on—and eventually to explain—communication behavior at several system levels and between different systems. Although the theory utilizes the general systems approach of attacking several system levels at the same time, it generally does not utilize specific general systems concepts of communication.

Such a multi-systems theory appears to be possible in communication theory (Westley, 1966) and in theories of organizational and individual decision-making (Alexis and Wilson, 1967). Such a theory would be of great utility for a professional communicator who could use one theory to deal with communication at several system levels: communication behavior of the organization as a whole; of individuals and subsystems within the organization; of external publics, consumers, and clients; and of other organizations to which the organization is linked.

Once the theory has been conceptualized, original data from research at each of these four system levels will be presented to test the theory, to develop it further, and to suggest additional research needed to continue to build the theory.

### **A THEORY OF DECISION SITUATIONS AND COMMUNICATION BEHAVIOR**

In this section, I will build a theory of organizational communication which explains how different kinds of com-

munication behaviors are motivated by individual and structural characteristics of people and situations. With such a theory, a professional communicator wishing to facilitate or prevent a given type of communication behavior could use the theory to assess the probability of successful communication or to determine which individual or structural changes would be needed before he could achieve his communication objective.

Most of the concepts making up the theory are drawn from the theoretical literature on communication theory, cognitive processes, organizational behavior, and decision-making. The purpose here, however, is not just to review these concepts, but to formulate them together into a single general theory.

To begin with, I will define two types of communication behaviors which systems (including individuals, units within organizations, organizations, publics, and groups) engage in. Systems acquire (seek or listen to) information and they disseminate (give) information. Information can be defined in information theory terms as anything that reduces the uncertainty in a situation (Schramm, 1973b: 38)—a missing piece in a picture of a situation. When a system first gives information and then seeks information in the form of feedback, the system generally is communicating in Thayer's synchronic mode. When it acquires information (by listening or asking a question) before disseminating information, the system generally is communicating in the diachronic mode.

Systems always communicate within a specific situation, and both the nature of the system and of the situation will affect the kind of communication procedure the system will design to control its behavior in that situation (see Carter, 1973). Systems are most likely to communicate in "decision situations," situations in which systems must recognize and move toward one alternative or think about and choose a movement toward more than one alternative (see Carter, 1965).<sup>1</sup> The system's propensity to communicate—i.e., to design procedures for information acquisition and dissemination (Grünig, 1973)—is determined jointly by individual and structural characteristics of the situation.

Structural characteristics can be defined as "relationships between individuals rather than the characteristics of individuals themselves" (Burns and Stalker, 1961: 3), "the persistent qualities or given elements in the environmental conditions of choice or action" (V. A. Thompson, 1961: 7), or "an interrelated set of events which return upon themselves to complete and renew a cycle of activities" (Katz and Kahn, 1966: 20-21). In short, structure is a relationship, expected relationship, or cycle of relationships between individuals, systems, or a system and its environment that affects the behavior of that system but which is not under the control of the system acting alone.

The decision-situation model of organizational communication conceptualized here predicts that systems will acquire and disseminate information as a result of two dimensions of a decision situation—one dimension which is individual, the other which is structural. To communicate, the cognitive structure of the individual (or the collective "cognition" of other systems) must be open to the situation, and the structure of the situation must be open. An open individual is one who recognizes alternatives—i.e., that a problem exists. An open structure is a structure where alternatives are available for the open individual to perceive—i.e., where alternatives are not excluded by constraints.

These two dimensions were developed from theories of individual decision-making (Grunig, 1966). They are concepts which have been articulated in a similar fashion by Katona (1953), Simon (1957), Biggs (1968), Kast and Rosenzweig (1970), Cyert and March (1963), Stigler (1961), Dewey (1922), Carter (1965), McDonough (1963), and Nicosia (1966). At the individual level, most theorists distinguish variation in the problem-solving dimension as the difference between decision and habit (e.g., Katona, 1953). The constraints dimension also can be supported by cognitive concepts in the literature. For example constraints generally are what determine the "volition" of the decision maker (Brehm and Cohen, 1962: 201-220) or the "situational relevance" of alternatives (Carter, 1965).

Organizational theorists have applied similar concepts to the analysis of more complex systems. For the problem-recognition dimension, March and Simon (1958: 139, 187) contrast routinized and problem-solving responses of organizations and discuss programmed decisions; Hall (1972: 36) contrasts rationality norms and survival norms; Katz and Kahn (1966: 104, 59) distinguish between open and closed organizations and flexible versus rigid codes; Hall, Haas, and Johnson (1966: 159) define an organizational problem as "any set of events which may have consequences for the survival of the organization"; Burns and Stalker (1961: 119-123) contrast a mechanistic and organic organization; Bennis (1959) uses the concepts of problem-solving and habit to contrast leadership style in organizations; and Hage and Aiken (1970) distinguish between dynamic and static organizations.

One also can note similarities to the problem-recognition dimension in Etzioni's (1964: 16-19) distinction between the systems model (reaction to problems) of organizations and the goal model (seeking a predetermined end), in V. A. Thompson's (1961: 630) contrast between a monocratic and innovative organization, in Schein's (1970: 120) adaptive-coping cycle, and in Crozier's (1964) description of the functioning of a closed-system bureaucratic organization.

While discussing the problem-recognition dimension, both organizational and individual theorists discuss the effect of decision rules on problem recognition. At the individual level, decision rules are habits which may be "intelligent habits" (they are flexible and the individual is aware of them) or routine habits which sink below the level of consciousness and shut off consideration of new alternatives (Dewey, 1922: 71, 211). At the organizational level, Perrow (1972: 31) describes what is essentially the fixing of intelligent habits into routine habits:

The greatest problem with rules is that organizations and their environments change faster than their rules. Most bad rules were once good, designed for a situation that no longer exists.

All systems develop decision rules to economize on information search, but systems differ on the problem-recognition dimension in the extent to which these rules remain flexible or become rigid and shut off the system from its environment.

The problem-recognition dimension also is closely tied to the structural characteristics of an organization, as evidenced, for example, by Hage and Aiken's (1972: 66-68) research. They found that dynamic (open system) organizations were high in complexity and low in centralization, formalization, and stratification. Static (closed system) organizations, on the other hand, were low in complexity, but high on the other three attributes.

The constraint dimension (or the openness of the structure) also is used widely, in varying terms, in the organizational literature. The external environment may place constraints on the organization as a supra-system, and the organization may in turn place constraints around the subsystems and individuals within the organization.

Buck (1966: 116-117) points out that decisions by individuals high in an organization become constraints around decisions by individuals one level below, and so on. Thus, individuals at the lowest levels of the organization generally make completely constrained decisions.

Thayer (1968: 95, 97) pointed out that constraints are what organize an organization. Indeed, without constraints, few formal organizations could exist. March and Simon (1958: 170-171) discuss internal organizational constraints in terms of "bounded rationality" or the "premises of decision making." Perrow (1972: 152) pointed out that the superior can structure the environment and perceptions of the subordinate, while Crozier (1964: 150) called "constraints of technical and organizational origins" the "organizational givens." Burns (1967: 158) added that "programmed decision-making is what it is because of the institutional framework around the individual." In relation to communication, both Buck (1966: 168) and Blau and Schoenherr (1971: 300) have pointed out that constraints generally take away the impact of human

relations techniques, such as sensitivity sessions and the psychological dispositions of individuals.

At the supra-system level, organizations are also constrained by their technology and by their environment. Such constraints include mechanization (Thompson, 1967: 15-18; Crozier, 1964; Blau and Schoenherr, 1971), technology (Perrow, 1972: 166), stability or instability of demand (Hage and Aiken, 1970: 77), competition (Hall, 1972: 73, 303), social and political support for the organization (Hall, 1972: 73-74; Thompson, 1967: 68), and the change in the level of knowledge (Hage and Aiken, 1970: 74).

Given, then, that these two dimensions of a decision situation have been found to predict the behavior of a variety of systems, the dimensions can be combined to produce four types of general behaviors which should be highly useful in explaining communication behavior. The typologies can be visualized best as the four quadrants of a Cartesian coordinate (see Figure 1). The conceptualization of the four behavior types is described.

*Problem-facing* behavior occurs in a decision situation in which the system is open to this situation—it recognizes that alternatives are present and therefore that a problem exists. Alternatives are also available within the structure of the situation. An individual or other system in this situation is "rational." He or it weighs alternatives and chooses among

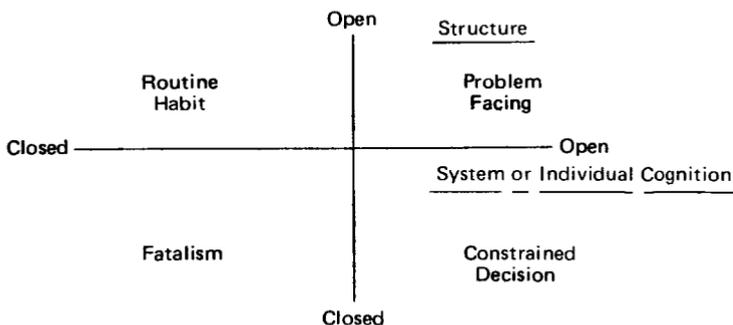


Figure 1:

them. Because there are few constraints, the system has volition in making a choice. Because the system evaluates alternatives, information is useful in clarifying the system's picture of these alternatives. Thus, both information acquisition and dissemination (diachronic communication) are communication behaviors characteristic of this general behavior type. When decision rules are present, however, they encapsulate previously acquired information and reduce the amount of information acquisition necessary for the system in situations similar to ones previously experienced.

Another important concept for systems in problem-facing situations is the concept of problem orientation—the orientation to particular consequences of a choice of alternatives (attributes of alternatives) that are most relevant to the system making the choice. Problem orientation is useful particularly in defining information needs of systems: it reveals the kind of information a system needs to discriminate between alternatives.

*Constrained behavior* occurs in situations where physical, social, or other structural blocks within the situation rule out some or all but one alternative which the system might like to move toward. The individual or system has little volition, even though he or it recognizes alternatives that are excluded by constraints in the situation. Because alternatives are constrained, the system actively will acquire information only to the point where the system fully perceives the existence of constraints which prevent it from using the information. The information that generally is most situationally relevant and sought in this situation is information about a means for eliminating the constraint.

*Routine habit* behavior occurs when an individual or system is in a situation where an open structure makes alternatives available, but yet the system considers only a habitual alternative. Information seeking is negligible in this situation and is directed generally only toward messages which reinforce the habitual alternative. Such an individual or system readily disseminates information to defend its habitual behavior,

however, whenever the habitual alternative is threatened. In other words, synchronic communication would be the only communication mode utilized by a system in this situation. An alternative name for this behavior is programmed behavior. Like a computer, this system is capable of many behaviors, but does only what it is programmed to do. Since this behavior is post-decisional it also subsumes Festinger's (1957) theory of cognitive dissonance.

In *fatalistic behavior* the system neither recognizes a problem nor has alternatives available within the structure. The individual or system has no control over the environment and has lost interest in controlling it. Another name for this behavior is mechanistic behavior. Machines are constrained to one behavior and are incapable of even being programmed for new ones.

These types of decision situations should explain the *orientational* behavior of organizations as systems, as well as the behavior of individuals and subsystems of an organization. The model becomes even more useful, however, if it is extended to *coorientational* situations (for the concept of coorientation see McLeod and Chaffee, 1973).

In a coorientational situation, two systems which are oriented to a situation coorient with one another in regard to either or both of the respective situations. To communicate with one another, two systems generally would have to be in situations which allow for symbiosis of problems and constraints (symbiosis as a necessary condition for communication is Thayer's [1968] concept).

Of the ten possible combinations of the four decision behaviors, only the combination of two problem-facing systems with related problems would be symbiotic enough to allow for diachronic communication to take place with any frequency. Two systems in routine habit situations would direct synchronic communication toward one another and could reinforce each other if they were attached to the same alternative. Two systems in a constrained behavior situation could communicate diachronically about a common constraint or about the frustrations of being constrained. It is also feasible that a

problem-facing system could communicate in the diachronic mode with any system in one of the other situations to the extent of achieving accuracy with that system (being able to predict the cognitions of the other system). The accuracy could be two-sided with a constrained system which has not fully perceived the existence of its constraints, but only could be one-sided with systems engaging in the other two behaviors, which would communicate either synchronically or not at all. In none of the other combinations of behavior types could communication occur with any success beyond simple awareness of the existence of the other system.<sup>2</sup>

These, then, are the elemental concepts and relationships of the multi-systems theory. As conceptualized, the theory seems capable of explaining many of the empirical generalizations commonly found in the study of organizations.

For example, communication networks probably exist in organizations because constraints are set up to control the behavior of individuals in the organization and in turn to determine the direction of communication. There are other examples. Management personnel may not be able to communicate with subordinates or with labor representatives because of these constraints, or because they may perceive an organizational problem from a different perspective (for example, as the need for growth or profits rather than the need for desirable working hours or adequate salary).

Horizontal, interdepartmental communication probably takes place when there are symbiotic problems. When these subsystems do not have symbiotic problems, they probably are more likely to misperceive the cognitions of the other subsystem. The frequent finding that communication between peers in a subsystem serves to vent frustrations probably occurs because of shared constrained behaviors. And the grapevine probably occurs when individuals share problems which the organization does not want them to face and about which management withholds information.

Similarly, organizations may not be able to acquire information from publics or clients because the organization is engaging

in routine habit behavior while the outside system either falls into a different decision situation or has a conflicting routine habit. Similarly, constraints may make an organization or a product irrelevant to a public or consumer. And we might theorize that organizations whose behavior generally is problem-facing would be most likely to define their public relations activities as diachronic communication, whereas organizations engaging in routine habit behavior generally would define public relations as synchronic communication.

Finally, the theory would predict that an organization would be most likely to communicate with another organization with a symbiotic problem or with a common constraint which the two might attempt to eliminate through lobbying or similar communication procedures.

The theory, in other words, opens up numerous possibilities both for research and for professional application. Because it seems to explain many forms of organizational communication, it has great heuristic value in predicting probabilities of success and failure in communication. The remainder of this article, then, presents brief summaries of research projects designed to test and elaborate the theory and then suggests limitations of the theory and new directions for further theory building.

#### **INTERNAL COMMUNICATION: THE CASE OF A UTILITY COMPANY**

One desirable property of the decision-situation model is that it can be used as a means of seeking information from employees or publics at the same time that it is being tested empirically. In a study of a utility company servicing metropolitan Washington, D.C., the theory was used to help the company's employee communication department isolate types of employees in the company, to explain the communication behavior of these employee types, to isolate misunderstandings between management and workers, and to determine the information needs of employees.<sup>3</sup> These data also provided an empirical test.

The analysis was carried out through a case grouping procedure, a method perfectly suited for the professional communicator who must define and understand types of employees, publics, or consumers. In case grouping, the researcher puts each respondent into one of a limited number of typologies based on the similarity of responses on all concepts measured. Then he can compare concepts within and across types to determine the importance of the concept in defining the type and in distinguishing it from other types. Case grouping analysis, therefore, differs from cross-sectional analysis which shows the distribution of the entire sample around one or a small number of variables (see Salter, 1942).

Case grouping analysis can be accomplished rapidly through the use of Q-factor analysis, the correlation and factoring of persons rather than of variables. The important data in a Q-study are the factor scores, or the scores for each variable on each factor or type of person. These factor scores, in standardized Z-scores, make comparison within and between factors possible and reveal the interrelationships of variables which produced the types of people.

In the utility study, three types of employees resulted: an older, basically content, worker who because of age and seniority felt constrained in his job; a younger worker who considered alternative jobs, had high aspirations, and currently was dissatisfied with his job; and a management type of higher echelon employees.<sup>4</sup> These employee types are called the constrained older workers, the dissatisfied workers, and the management.

The decision-situation model was applied in two ways in deriving the typologies. First, employees were asked questions to determine whether they still considered other jobs and their response was coded according to whether they perceived a problem (considered other jobs) and whether they faced constraints to taking another job.<sup>5</sup>

Then the problem orientations of these worker types was measured in order to determine their information needs. Table 1 shows that the constrained older workers clearly fell into the

**TABLE 1**  
**Decision Situation Variables for Three**  
**Employee Types, in Z-Scores**

	Recognize Problem	Face Constraints
Constrained older workers	-1.6	1.8
Dissatisfied younger workers	1.2	-1.4
Management	-.4	-.9

fatalistic behavior category. They did not recognize a problem—they were least likely to be considering other jobs—and they faced the most constraints to finding another job—primarily the constraints of age and seniority. The younger workers were problem facers in regard to other jobs, scoring high on problem recognition and low on constraints. Management was below average on both concepts and could be placed into the quadrant for routine habit.

The decision-situation theory would predict the younger workers to be most likely to acquire and be exposed to information about the company; Table 2 shows this to be true. This table shows the results of questions which asked if employees had heard five items of information about the

**TABLE 2**  
**Sources from Which Employee Types Heard Five**  
**Information Items About the Company, by Employee**  
**Types, in Z-Scores**

	Constrained Older Workers	Dissatisfied Younger Workers	Manage- ment
Not heard	2.2	.2	-1.9
News board (bulletin board)	.5	.3	-.8
Employee magazine	.1	.7	-.5
Management newsletter	-.5	-.5	.6
Outside media	.2	.1	-.5
Internal formal word-of-mouth	-.6	-1.0	1.3
Internal informal word-of-mouth	-.7	.4	.1
External word-of-mouth	-.1	-.1	.1

company and from what source they had heard it. The older workers engaging in fatalistic behavior seldom heard the items, while the younger workers were above average on nearly all potential sources of the information. The management type, which was the original source of these information items generally heard them from formal word-of-mouth channels.

When the respondents were asked which existing and planned formal company media they had been exposed to or would expose themselves to (see Table 3), the fatalistic employees were well below average on all media, management was well above average on all but a proposed complaint system, and the problem-facing younger workers were positive on only those media which provided relevant information rather than expressive reinforcement (a news bulletin board, seminars, and a newspaper) and which would allow them to give information about their problems (the complaint system). Management was most likely to be exposed to company media, probably because routine habit systems seek reinforcement.

Other data showed that the problem facers were most likely to use the grapevine when they needed information about the company, while the fatalistic employees were most likely to go to their supervisor for that information. Management was the only type to evaluate positively the company formal media. And when the respondents were asked whether management's communication purpose was information seeking or giving, both

**TABLE 3**  
**Exposure to Present and Planned Company Media**  
**by Three Employee Types, in Z-Scores**

	Constrained Older Workers	Dissatisfied Younger Workers	Manage- ment
News board exposure	-1.2	1.2	.4
Employee magazine exposure	-.4	-1.5	1.1
Management newsletter exposure	-1.4	-1.0	2.3
Exposure to planned newspaper	-1.3	.3	.7
Desire to attend seminars	-1.3	.5	1.0
Anticipated use of complaint system	-.3	2.1	-1.4

worker types strongly indicated the purpose was giving, while the management type indicated just as strongly that it was seeking.

Questions were also asked to determine each respondent's problem orientation in choosing a job, his orientation in performing his role in the organization, and the problem orientation he believed the overall organization should stress. Then, applying the coorientation paradigm, I asked workers to predict how management would answer the same questions and asked management to predict how workers would answer. The responses for organization orientation are illustrated in Table 4.

The fatalistic older workers believed the organization should be most oriented toward employees, efficiency, and the environment (the company had just decided to build a nuclear power plant). The problem-facing workers were most concerned with the environment, employees, and profits. Management thought the company should be most concerned with consumers and profits, and least with employees and the environment.

**TABLE 4**  
**Orientations Three Types of Employees Think the**  
**Company Should Have as an Organization and Predictions**  
**by Workers for Management and Management for Workers,**  
**in Z-Scores**

	Orientation				
	Profits	Consumers	Efficiency	Employees	Environment
<b>Constrained older workers</b>					
Self	-1.3	-1.6	1.4	1.7	.9
Management	1.3	-.8	-.6	-.5	.6
<b>Dissatisfied younger workers</b>					
Self	.2	-.1	-1.5	.2	1.6
Management	1.3	-.6	-.1	-.2	.4
<b>Management</b>					
Self	.7	1.6	-.1	-1.6	-1.9
Workers	-1.7	1.3	.6	.6	-.9

Not only do these data illuminate worker-management disagreements as to which problems are important, they also show how misconceptions of what the other is thinking can result when two decision situations are not conducive to diachronic communication. Both worker types believed management was concerned only with profits and not with consumers, while management believed workers were, like themselves, most concerned with consumers and not with the environment.

As shown in Table 5, those orientations, as expected, predicted the kind of information considered relevant by the three types. Constrained older workers, with an employee orientation, most wanted information on other workers and on their own role in the company. As often is typical of fatalists, these older workers wanted information that would help them rationalize their situation. The problem facers—with an environment, profit, and employee orientation—wanted financial information, as well as information on their role and on consumers. Management, with a consumer orientation, likewise preferred information on decisions affecting consumers.

These orientations and decisions types also would seem to explain which people are most likely to communicate with each other in the organization, but there were no data to test that hypothesis.

In short, the Q-analysis provided strong support for the decision-situation model. To further test the model, an R-corre-

TABLE 5  
Types of Company Information Preferred by  
Three Employee Types, in Z-Scores

Type of Information	Constrained Older Workers	Dissatisfied Younger Workers	Management
Other employees	2.5	-.6	-1.9
Company financial information	-1.2	.9	.1
Government regulation	.2	-.9	.1
Own role in company	1.8	.0	-1.2
Decisions affecting consumers	-1.6	.5	1.5
Decisions affecting employees	-1.0	1.1	-.0

lational analysis also was done on some of the key variables. First, the responses to all of the information network items that were presented in Table 2 were added and this total information acquisition score was correlated with the problem-recognition and constraint dimensions. Table 6 shows that both dimensions correlated significantly with information acquisition. (Note that Gamma coefficients, which are more appropriate correlation coefficients for the ordinal data used here than are Pearsonian R's, were higher than the R's.) Partial correlation and stepwise multiple regression also showed that problem recognition explains information acquisition independently of constraints, although constraints had no effect independent of problem recognition (the two dimensions had a negative correlation of  $-.48$ ).

Then we added all items measuring exposure to several company media items and correlated this total score with problem recognition and constraints. The zero-order correlations in Table 6 were significant, but low, for both dimensions and nonsignificant for both dimensions when the other dimension was partialled out. The constraint dimension was nearly significant, however, and the best predictor of the two for exposure.

Although the operationalizations of the decision-situation dimensions tapped only part of the decision situations to which these information items would apply, the correlations are still

TABLE 6  
Correlations Between Decision-Situation Dimensions and  
Two Communication Variables for Employee Study

	Gamma	Simple R	Partial R	Multiple R <sup>a</sup>	Beta Weight
Information acquisition with:					
Problem recognition	.44	.31	.25	.31	.28
Constraints	-.37	-.21	-.07	.31	.08
Media exposure with:					
Constraints	-.25	-.21	-.15	.21	-.17
Problem recognition	.18	.17	.07	.22	.08

a. Stepwise multiple regression; the difference in multiple R's reflects the explanatory power of each of the two dimensions independent of the other.

generally significant, although problem recognition explains the information knowledge questions best (probably because the information is retained for application to a problem), while constraints best explain the lack of exposure to formal company media. Since the content of the media probably was not relevant to perceived problems, the problem-recognition dimension did not correlate with media exposure.

### **CASE STUDY OF A CONSUMER INFORMATION PROGRAM**

Organizations communicate regularly with consumers, publics, clients, and other external groups. Seldom, however, do organizational theorists pay much attention to this type of organizational communication. Yet it is the most important form of communication for an innovative organization which attempts to adapt to the needs of its environment.

Etzioni (1964: 98-100) suggests that few organizations have institutionalized lines of communication outside the organization. The reason for this failure can be interpreted as failure of coorientation between systems in conflicting decision situations. Etzioni explains that communication with clients, for example "can be bad for the organization man" because interaction with clients generally is concentrated in lower reaches of the organization. If an employee is "successful with clients, promotion to the next, less client-centered level is more difficult."

In a second application of the decision-situation theory to an organizational system, we conducted a case study of the consumer information program of a major food and general merchandise chain in the Baltimore-Washington, D.C. area.<sup>6</sup> The company had received recognition and several awards for its "consumer has a right to know" program. Again, the theory was tested at the same time that it was used to help the organization seek information from its customers.

**TABLE 7**  
**Decision-Situation Variables for Three**  
**Consumer Types, in Z-Scores**

	Recognize Problem	Face Constraints
Working Class	-1.5	2.8
Professionals	-.5	.5
Middle Class	.5	-.2

Q-factor analysis again was used to isolate types of consumers.<sup>7</sup> Three types resulted, types which best could be distinguished by their demographic characteristics. One we called the "working-class" type, a second the middle-class type, and the third the "professional" type.

In this study, problem recognition was determined by asking respondents how many stores they had considered in deciding to shop at the store or stores at which they now shop. To measure constraints, we asked why these stores had been considered or not considered and responses were coded for mention of constraints. The most frequent constraint was lack of time or transportation needed to go beyond the nearest food store or to shop at more than one store.

Table 7 shows that the working-class type was clearly in the fatalistic mode (the constraint was generally distance), the middle-class type was slightly within the problem-facing quadrant, and the professionals were slightly in the fatalistic mode (the constraint was generally time). Table 8 shows the sources

**TABLE 8**  
**Sources From Which Three Consumer Types Heard**  
**of Four Consumer Programs, in Z-Scores**

	Working Class	Profes- sionals	Middle Class
Not heard	2.7	-1.9	-1.3
Radio-television	-1.5	.5	.2
Newspaper	-1.8	.1	-1.0
Other people	.1	.1	.0
In store	-1.1	1.0	-.3
Other	.6	-.3	-.3

**TABLE 9**  
**Use and Comparison of Newspaper Food Advertisements**  
**by Three Consumer Types, in Z-Scores**

	Working Class	Profes- sionals	Middle Class
Food advertisement attention	-.7	.1	.6
Food advertisement comparison	-1.0	.9	1.0

from which each of the types had acquired information about four of the company's consumer programs. These data are consistent with the predictions of the decision-situation model for the working class and to a lesser extent for the middle class. The professionals had acquired more information than one would expect, however, for moderate fatalists. The reason probably is that the professionals were exposed to the information whether they sought it or not—particularly through in-store displays and radio and television advertisements—or as the result of the decision situation of buying an individual product rather than choosing a store in which to shop.

We also asked whether respondents read food store advertisements and compared these advertisements. The results, shown in Table 9, were similar to the consumer information data. The fatalists—the working class—were well below average on this variable. The middle class—the problem facers—was above average, and the professionals were in between. The same pattern is displayed also in Table 10 for the extent to which each type used the company's consumer information programs. Similarly, when we asked whether the respondents gave

**TABLE 10**  
**Extent To Which Three Consumer Types Use**  
**Four Consumer Programs, in Z-Scores**

Program	Working Class	Profes- sionals	Middle Class
Unit pricing	-1.8	.7	.3
Open dating	-1.6	1.6	1.1
Nutritional labeling	-2.0	-.1	.3
Percent labeling	-2.3	-.6	.7

information to others about the consumer programs, the resulting Z-score for the working class was  $-2.2$ ,  $-1.4$  for the professionals, and  $.5$  for the middle class. Also, the problem-facing middle class generally first learned of the company through advertisements, the professionals by observing a store, and the working class by word-of-mouth or observation (a communication pattern explained by the constraints of each group).

We also applied the concept of problem orientation to these consumers to determine information needs—needs that would reveal whether the company's consumer information program was meeting their information needs. These orientations showed that the middle class generally bought with a price orientation, professionals with a brand orientation, and the working class with no orientation. We also determined problem orientation for typical general merchandise products to determine consumer information needs for these products. Table 11 shows the results for one of the items—slacks. It shows that the middle class could be expected to seek information on ease of care and price, while professionals were most concerned with appearance (and generally shopped at more elite stores than this company's). The results were ambiguous for the working class.

As with the employee study, the information-acquisition items were totalled and correlated with each decision-situation dimension. In this case, only constraints had a significant effect

**TABLE 11**  
**Problem Orientation of Three Consumer Types**  
**in Buying Slacks, in Z-Scores**

Orientation	Working Class	Profes- sionals	Middle Class
Fit	.0	-.9	-.5
Quality	-.3	.1	-.6
Ease of care	.5	-.1	1.2
Appearance	.9	1.5	-.0
Price	.7	.3	.5
Brand	.4	.0	.4

(Table 12). Problem recognition perhaps was measured poorly, which also would explain why the professionals tended to seek more information than expected—they were perhaps in a more constrained decision situation than in fatalism.

Then we added the scores for the advertisement attention and advertisement comparison variables and calculated similar correlations. In this case both dimensions had a significant and equal effect on this form of communication behavior, probably because this information was more relevant than the consumer information to the decision situation of choosing a store.

In general, this study showed again the value of the theory in explaining the communication behavior and information needs of another system—this time consumers in the organization's environment.

#### A CASE STUDY OF ORGANIZATION-CLIENTELE COMMUNICATION

Another application of the model in an organizational setting (Grunig, 1974) came in an effort to explain the internal communication network and the organization-clientele network of a community development agency in a suburban jurisdiction

**TABLE 12**  
**Correlations Between Decision-Situation Dimensions**  
**and Two Communication Variables for Consumer Study**

	Gamma	Simple R	Partial R	Multiple R <sup>a</sup>	Beta Weight
Information acquisition with:					
Constraints	-.43	-.21	-.17	.21	-.21
Problem recognition	.18	.11	.00	b	b
Advertisement attention and comparison with:					
Problem recognition	.29	.22	.12	.22	.15
Constraints	-.47	-.22	-.12	.25	-.15

a. Stepwise multiple regression; the difference in multiple R's reflects the explanatory power of each of the two dimensions independent of the other.

b. Relationship not strong enough to be included in stepwise multiple regression.

of Washington, D.C. It was expected that the sociometric linkages inside the organization could be explained by similarities in individual cognition of the problem orientation the organization should have and the constraints on the organization which the individual had encountered and thus perceived. Similarly, it was expected that those individuals lower in the organization would have more congruent decision situations with the clientele and thus would be most likely to understand the clientele) i.e., to predict accurately the problem orientation of the clientele and the constraints faced by the clientele.

The first prediction did not hold. Employees reporting sociometric linkages with one another were no more likely to share problem orientations or to report constraints on agency alternatives. There was, however, a difference in problem orientation between blacks and whites in the organization (blacks mentioned housing and services, whites employment). Nevertheless, blacks were only slightly more likely to communicate with blacks than whites and whites only slightly more likely to communicate with whites than blacks. At the same time, blacks were more congruent with the clientele in their cognitions of problems and perceptions of constraints, and, as the model would predict, also had more communication contact with the clientele. Both blacks and whites, however, could predict accurately the problem orientation of the low-income clientele.

The best explanation of these findings was that organizational structure and roles can enhance as well as restrict communication, in this case by using constraints to force coorientation that would not occur naturally. In this agency, blacks and whites were mixed throughout the organization, and role relationships caused them to communicate with one another despite their differing problem orientations. Blacks and whites with differing natural communication behaviors outside the organization were placed in interacting roles, and accurate communication flowed from the clientele to the organization even though not all organization members agreed with one another or with the clientele.<sup>8</sup>

## TOTAL ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION: A STUDY OF PUBLIC RELATIONS

Organizations communicate with their environments in several ways, either through individual contacts of their members or through institutionalized communications roles. One institutionalized role is that of the public relations department. Most formal organizations use a public relations staff for at least part of their external communication, yet surprisingly few organizational researchers have studied the public relations role.<sup>9</sup>

For this reason, a study of public relations practitioners was designed to determine whether the decision-situation model, applied at the total organization level, would predict the communication behavior of the organization's public relations department. The study also was designed to determine how structural characteristics of an organization would relate to the behavior of organizations in different decision situations.

A questionnaire was administered to public relations heads of 216 organizations in the Washington-Baltimore area.<sup>10</sup> The questionnaire consisted of items subsumed under the concept of problem recognition (items on importance of tradition, programmed behavior, and code rigidity) and items measuring several constraints (such as routine technology, mechanization, social-political constraints, and declining demand). It also included structural variables (size, complexity, centralization, formalization, stratification, amount of production, efficiency, age, and compliance patterns), a series of public relations procedures (such as formal and informal research of the public, use of press releases, contacts with government, and so forth) and several other communication variables which basically distinguished between synchronic and diachronic communication. Finally, several scales were used to measure the professionalism of the public relations practitioner, with the expectation that professionals, as opposed to careerists, would be less likely to have their behavior determined by the structural constraints of the organization. (These scales were adapted from Wilensky, 1964: 152-153; and Hage and Aiken, 1967: 80.)

The decision-situation and structural variables were factor analyzed to yield types of organizations. Then the communication variables were factor analyzed to yield types of communication procedures. Finally, the professionalization variables were factored into professional and careerist scales. The organization types then were correlated with the types of communication procedures, with and without professionalization partialled out, to give a test of the decision-behavior concepts at the organizational level.

The organizational variables could not be factored adequately into four types that would match the decision modes. Problem-recognition and constraint variables always came out on one factor, indicating that the two tended to covary in these organizations. Thus, the final factor solution consisted of two types of organizational behaviors—problem-facing and fatalistic (mechanistic) behaviors.

Fatalistic organizations were high on programmed behavior, code rigidity, and importance of tradition (concepts subsumed under the problem-recognition dimension). They were also high on all constraints measured; these organizations were constrained by routine technology, a stagnant level of knowledge, and a great deal of competition. To a lesser extent, they were constrained by declining demand and sociopolitical opposition.

Although these types of organizational behaviors have been conceptualized as occurring in specific situations and not necessarily across situations, the data showed that the two types of organizational behaviors also were characterized by cross-situational structural attributes. From these data one might conclude that organizational structure causes organizations to behave in a similar manner in a variety of situations.

Structural variables indicated that fatalistic organizations were centralized, stratified, used coercive compliance patterns, and utilized mediating technology (such as a bank which mediates between savers and borrowers). Problem-facing organizations were low on these same variables, but high on complexity, formalization, emphasis on efficiency, utilitarian compliance patterns, and long-linked technology (such as the

assembly line where one production process depends on the completion of an antecedent process). In addition, problem-facing organizations were larger, had larger public relations staffs, and gave more power to their public relations staffs.

These types of organizational behavior, then, were similar to Burns and Stalker's (1961) organic and mechanistic organizations and Hage and Aiken's (1970) static and dynamic organizations. However, these results showed the problem-facing organizations to be formalized whereas they were not found to be so in the Hage and Aiken study.<sup>11</sup> Constrained behavior and routine habit organizations did not show up in this study, probably because organizations, more so than individuals, tend to react to their environment rather than attempt to control it. When the environment is open, the system opens; when the environment is closed, the system closes. Organizations apparently cannot see beyond their constraints (constrained behavior) and cannot shut themselves off from opportunities (routine habit).

This reactive organizational behavior also could have occurred because individuals who organize into complex systems must of necessity give up some degrees of freedom in determining their own behavior. Thus, the constraints of role relationships prevent any one individual from closing up the organization in the face of an opportunity or from dwelling too long on an unfeasible alternative.

To develop dependent communication variables in this study, the public relations procedures measured were factored into two types of procedures. Other communication variables did not factor and were analyzed separately. Most of the information-acquisition procedures loaded highest on one factor (formal and informal research, contacts with "thought leaders," and contacts with the public). Information-dissemination procedures (such as writing press releases, holding press conferences, staging events, and so forth) loaded highest on the other. The professional and careerist items factored into a professional and a careerist scale (professional training was the most important variable for the professional scale, careerist values, for the careerist scale).

The information-acquisition factor (generally consisting of diachronic procedures) was expected to correlate positively with the problem-facing organization factor, but the correlation was almost zero. Fatalistic organizational behavior, as expected, correlated negatively with information-seeking procedures at  $-.134$  (significant at  $.05$ ). Problem-facing organizations correlated  $.342$  with information-giving procedures, while fatalistic organizations correlated at  $-.357$ .

As the theory would predict, fatalistic organizations were found to neither seek nor give information. Other communication variables showed that the public relations staff in a fatalistic organization exists primarily to react to the mass media in time of a crisis and to keep up interpersonal contacts with linkages needed for the organization's survival.

Problem-facing organizations used public relations for publicity (information giving), but not for public opinion research. The reason is probably that these organizations were highly formalized and traditionally had defined the public relations role as a publicity role.

The professional scale correlated negatively ( $-.136$ ) with the fatalistic factor, the careerist scale, positively ( $.159$ ). Neither scale correlated significantly with the problem-facing scale. The principal reason for the low correlations was a lack of variance in the sample; few respondents scored highly on scales measuring professionalism. As a result, these scales had no effect on the correlations when they were partialled out.

A Q-factor analysis, however, revealed a pattern of relationships more consistent with the theory. In this analysis, the sample of organizations was factored into two types, based on all variables measured. Because one of the two factors had more than 25% negative loadings, the computer program placed these negative-loading organizations into a third type (an opposite type of organization).<sup>1 2</sup>

Two of these organization types were problem-facing, the third fatalistic, and their characteristics were almost identical to the types found in the previous analysis. The two problem-facing types differed, however, in that one was less formalized,

smaller, and younger, utilized intensive technology, and had a public relations practitioner scoring high in professional training and professional evaluation. The communication behaviors of these three types fit the theoretical predictions almost perfectly as displayed in Table 13.

The fatalistic type was below average on all communication variables with the exception of press releases, informal contacts with newsmen, institutional advertisements, and the four linkage variables. Again, these results showed that public relations people in fatalistic organizations service the press in time of crisis (see negative score on crisis defense) and that they handle important interpersonal linkages.

The difference between the professional and careerist problem-facing types was clearly that between diachronic and synchronic communication. The careerist type was most likely to give information—to issue press releases, to have formal and informal contact with newsmen, to prepare institutional ads, to stage an event, to give rather than seek information externally, to have persuasion as a goal rather than understanding, to defend the organization in terms of crisis, to be oriented to the organization rather than the public, and to use downward internal communication. The professional type does all types of research, but the careerist type was slightly more likely to do formal surveys to evaluate a project and about as likely to do informal research to evaluate a project as was the professional type.

These data indicate that as problem-facing organizations become older, larger, and formalized, they form decision rules which institutionalize the public relations function as one which gives information on decisions reached by the rest of the organization. But public relations people have a small role in making those decisions.

Only problem-facing organizations which were new small, less formalized and which utilized intensive technology were likely to hire public relations professionals and to place them in a role where they had the flexibility to engage in diachronic communication.

**TABLE 13**  
**Comparison in Z-Scores, of Communication Variables**  
**for Three Types of Public Relations Situations**

	Problem-Solving		
	Profes- sional	Caree- rist	Fatal- istic
Press releases	-0	2.3	1.0
Formal surveys before project	1.0	.6	-.1
Formal surveys to evaluate project	.9	1.2	-.1
Informal research before project	1.0	-.6	-1.5
Informal research to evaluate project	.9	.3	-1.6
Preparing publications	-.2	-1.2	-1.3
Informal contacts with newsmen	.7	2.2	.1
Press conferences & formal contact with newsmen	-.0	.8	-1.1
Informal contacts with public	1.4	.5	-.9
Contacts with "Thought Leaders"	1.3	1.1	-1.5
Staging Events	.7	1.0	-.6
Preparing audio-visual materials	.8	.4	-1.0
Preparing institutional advertisements	-.1	1.5	.5
Counseling management	1.5	1.5	-.9
Contacting governmental officials	1.8	.8	-1.9
Writing speeches	.3	.1	-.8
External information giving (low), seeking (high)	.5	-.5	-1.3
Intrinsic (low), Extrinsic (high) appeals	1.5	-.1	-.2
PR goal—persuasion (low), understanding (high)	.4	-1.1	-.4
Crisis defense (low), crisis coping (high)	.0	-.8	-1.4
Orientation—organization (low), public (high)	1.0	-.2	.2
Boundary location—internal (low), external (high)	1.1	1.1	-1.0
Enabling linkages	.4	.4	.4
Functional linkages	.0	-.3	.2
Normative linkages	-.3	-1.3	.9
Diffused linkages	.0	.5	.5
Pressure group size—small (low), large (high)	.2	-.7	.2
Internal Communication—down (low), up (high)	1.2	-.4	-.7
Internal Communication—expressive (low), instrumental (high)	1.2	.3	-.6

As in the previous studies, these results showed that, once the structural and professional attributes characteristic to the organization as a system are sorted out, the theory explains well communication at another system level.

### **INTERORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION: A STUDY OF LOW-INCOME HOUSING**

In contrast to many forms of organizational communication, researchers have devoted a good deal of attention to communication between organizations—e.g., between those organizations which form a “Set” (Evans, 1966). The decision-situation theory predicts that interorganizational communication will take place between organizations with combinations of decision situations which facilitate communication—particularly combinations of problems-facing organizations facing symbiotic problems and common constraints.

In a study of a wealthy suburban county of Washington, D.C., a key informant from each of 26 interest groups, governmental agencies, housing developers, and private employers concerned with a shortage of low-income housing in the county (Grunig, 1972) was asked to define the housing problem and to list those alternatives not ruled out by constraints. Their responses were used to develop two organizational sets, which differed on whether they defined the housing problem as social or economic and on whether they had experienced constraints which would make governmental intervention in the housing market impossible. As the cororientation combinations of the theory predict, the group in the “social” typology communicated most with groups in that typology, as Table 14 indicates; the theory did not hold for the economic typology. The theoretical predictions probably did not hold for the economic typology because the housing problem generally was not as important to this group as it was to those organizations in the social typology, and thus the “economic” organizations were less motivated to communicate in order to solve the problem.

**TABLE 14**  
**Percentage of Possible Communication Contacts Within and Between**  
**Typologies in a Study of Interorganizational Communication**

	From Social Typology	From Economic Typology
To Social Typology	77%	50%
To Economic Typology	46%	43%

NOTE: Only the 77% of the From Liberal Typology to Liberal Typology differs significantly from the others. The minimum  $t$  of the three  $t$ 's testing the equality of this value with the other three percentages was 4.75,  $p < .01$ .

### CONCLUSIONS

A theory of organizational communication has been presented which explains communication at several system levels important to the management of organizations. The theory has been supported with data from employee subsystems, a consumer system, intersystem relations between employees and a clientele, public relations communications of the total organization, and interorganizational communication. In general, the results have supported the theory at all of these system levels. When the results did not support the predictions of the theory, the discrepancies could be explained in terms of the key concepts of the theory and as a result could be used to further elaborate and strengthen the theory.

The research results presented in this article, however, have illustrated the value of research in building a theory. Decision situations at all system levels have fit into those conceptualized here, but not all system levels have demonstrated all of the general behaviors. Communication procedures have generally fit within the predictions of the theory although slight variations have been found. Further research, then, obviously is needed before the theory can be called a general theory of organizational communication.

Finally, additional work needs to be done in perfecting the measurement of the concepts. In particular, development of a

scale that could be applied in many situations would make the theory much more valuable to the professional who might wish to use the theory as a framework for organizational information seeking from other systems.

## NOTES

1. Systems can also communicate in nondecision situations in which the individual has low involvement (Krugman, 1965). Communication behavior in nondecision situations probably differs from communication in decision situations in that the individual does less selective and purposive information seeking, but yet does not resist messages sent to him without any effort on his part. Further research is currently underway on communication in nondecision situations.

2. Work is currently underway to incorporate *involvement* as a third dimension in the model. In low-involvement situations, for example, the above communication to achieve awareness would be more probable than in high-involvement situations because there would be less resistance to incoming messages that are not consciously sought out.

3. This study was carried out by the Seminar in Corporate Communication in the University of Maryland College of Journalism. Graduate students involved in the study were Shirley Al Doory, Fred Jacoby, Kay Lewis, Marie Mastin, and Harriet Rothenberg.

4. Total sample size was 100. Half of the sample was chosen purposively, as is generally done in Q-studies. The other half was chosen randomly to guarantee representativeness of the sample. Half of the interviews were done in person; half on the telephone. All statistical analyses in this and the following studies were conducted at the University of Maryland Computer Center, with financial assistance from the Center.

5. Admittedly, this operationalization measured only one of many decision situations which an employee in an organization encounters, but it seems to be one of the most important decision situations in determining the kind of information an employee needs about a company.

6. This was another study of the Seminar in Corporate Communication. Graduate students involved in this study included Vickie Beard, Carlton Caldwell, John Conley, and Nick Miles.

7. Sample size was again 100, chosen randomly from the Maryland suburbs of Washington, D.C., and one suburb between Baltimore and Annapolis. The sample was stratified to ensure low-income respondents. All interviews were conducted by telephone.

8. For a review of research which shows that coorientational accuracy is a more frequent effect of communication than is agreement (attitude change or persuasion), see Wackman (1973).

9. An exception is a case study by Perrow (1961) which showed that organizations use public relations to build prestige which buffers the organization from its environment.

10. A study supported by a University of Maryland General Research Board grant to the author. The questionnaire was administered through a mail questionnaire, with a 75% rate of return.

11. Hage and Aiken's study, however, included only public agencies of about the same size. The present study included all kinds of organizations of different sizes. The results show that as organizations become larger and more complex, there is little alternative to formalizing them in order to manage them—even if the organizations are problem-facing. For more details on this study see Grunig (1974b).

12. The maximum number of variables (number of people in Q-study) for the factor analysis program utilized was 109. Since all 216 respondents could not be included the sample was split randomly. These results reported here are based on half of the sample. Other runs on the rest of the sample were almost identical.

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