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THE DYNAMICS OF UPWARD COMMUNICATION IN ORGANISATIONS

NAHEED TOURISH

**This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of
The Robert Gordon University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.**

October, 2007
Scotland

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ABSTRACT

This study has researched the dynamics of upward communication within organisations through the rubric of ingratiation theory (Jones, 1964) and impression management (Goffman, 1955).

Upward communication was explored via in-depth case studies, in a hundred and five semi-structured interviews across four organisations in Scotland. A qualitative, interpretive methodology was used. The interviews probed how upward communication was transmitted and investigated how ingratiation theory and impression management dynamics could impact on it by exploring the story telling (Gabriel, 200) and sense making approaches (Weick, 1995) employed by interviewees.

The data was then tabulated on Excel sheets, using the Framework Analysis (Swallow et al., 2002), thus establishing an easily referenced, perfectly structured database. Finally, the data was sifted, perused, distilled and analysed interpretively.

It was found that upward communication was shaped by processes such as downsizing, management and leadership styles, the power dynamics of the organisation, issues of publicness, and the perceived physical and psychological distance of the superior from the subordinate.

Finally, the components of opinion conformity (a factor common to ingratiation theory and impression management), employee silence (Morrison and Milliken, 2000, Milliken, 2003), and cynicism (Fleming and Spicer, 2002; Naus, 2004, 2007) were identified as the most significant syndromes that impacted on the levels of upward communication within the four organisations. Hence, a Conformity/Silence/Cynicism model of upward communication (the CSC model) was devised as a means of illustrating the significance of the most important stimuli of upward communication that the study revealed.

The issues raised in this study are fundamental to the theory and practice of management. Openness in the search for solutions to organisational problems is central to organisational learning. The creation of an organisational environment in which this is possible is therefore vital. This is the dominant context of this research.

LEXICON

This is a list of the phrases and words that may be capable of many interpretations, but which, in this study, are defined by their accompanied description:

Ingratiation: The word is used in the thesis in the same manner as is in Ingratiation Theory (Jones, 1964). The term ‘ingratiation’, according to Jones (1964:11) refers to ‘a class of strategic behaviours illicitly designed to influence a particular other person concerning the attractiveness of one’s personal qualities.’ The Concise Oxford English Dictionary (1992, 608) describes ‘ingratiation’ thus: ‘to bring oneself into favour; *in gratiam* into favour.’

Critical: The word is used as meaning adverse or disapproving criticism. It is not used to mean critical as in crucial or vital. It is meant to denote upward communication that is ‘critical of’ rather than important or imperative upward communication.

Feedback: This word is meant to represent upward communication from the employee to the supervisor and does not mean a critique or a constructive response from the superior to the subordinate.

Upward communication: Upward communication refers to any form of oral and/or written communication between the subordinate and the superior in an organisational setting. This study, however, does not take into consideration the impact of body

language that may be used to impact on the process of upward communication, as part of the array of the 'self – presentation' tactics of ingratiation theory (Jones, 1964) and impression management (Goffman, 1955).

Self-Presentation: The focus of this research is on the discursive and sense-making processes of self-presentation in impression management (Goffman, 1959) and ingratiation theory (Jones, 1964), rather than the non-verbal components, which may include the actor's attire, manner, attitude, and comportment. These are behaviours that are not examined in this thesis, which restricts itself to examining the communication aspects of 'self-presentation', as delineated in impression management and ingratiation theory.

CHAPTER 1

1. THE INTRODUCTION

1.1 Preamble

‘Communication represents the very essence of the human condition’ (Hargie and Dickson, 2004: 2). Within the corporate arena, ‘nothing happens in an organisation without communication’ (Oliver 2004: 20). Furthermore, ‘People are greatly influenced by, and remember, how others relate to them... Communication lies at the heart of effective management’ (Hargie et al., 2004: vi).

The study of organisational communication, including upward communication, has profound implications for organisational practice. Surveys have demonstrated the impact productive communication strategies have on the performance of the organisation. The 2005-2006 Watson Wyatt Communication ROI Study showed that effective communication is a leading indicator of an organization’s financial performance. Furthermore, it revealed that companies that communicated effectively had a 19.4 higher market premium than companies that did not. Interestingly, one of the key elements of effective organisation communication that the study identified was the practice of soliciting and making use of employee feedback. *See Appendix 1: Good Communication Practices Drive Superior Financial Performance.*

Roberto (2005) went a step further and urged leaders to recognize that expressing dissent can be very difficult and uncomfortable for lower-level managers and employees. Therefore, leaders cannot wait for dissent to come to them; they must actively seek it out in their organizations. In short, they must search for people

willing to say no to them. He advocated that leaders can and should take concrete steps to build conflict into their decision-making processes.

Roberts and O'Reilly (1974: 205) have suggested that there are three interpersonal factors that are constantly related to the aspects of upward communication:

- The subordinate's trust in his superior
- The subordinate's perception of his superior's influence over his future
- The subordinate's mobility aspirations.

In a study by Roberts and O'Reilly (1974), of these three variables, the first two, trust and influence, appear to be most closely related to the employees' estimates of their upward communication behaviour.

As Hargie and Dickson (2004: 326) have said, 'almost all exchanges between people involve some element of influence'. Communication dynamics in organisations are multifaceted and intricate, reflecting the complex values, climate and goals of the organisation and the environments in which it functions (Mintzberg, 1973, 1983; Cooren et al., 2006). Pacanowsky (1983) reminded us that organisations are firstly, social arrangements and by definition organisational culture is constructed by the organisation's members. Thus, the essence of an organisation is formed by the relationships which develop within the membership of the organisation. 'Organisations do not communicate – people do. Organisations do not have goals – the people who comprise them do' (Hargie et al, 2004: 5).

In as much as this is of the essence of the process of communication, this study introduces an element of social psychology into its investigation of the dynamics of bottom-up communication in organisations as it proceeds to research upward communication within the rubric of ingratiation theory (Jones, 1964) and impression management (Goffman, 1959). The term ‘ingratiation’, according to Jones (1964:11) refers to ‘a class of strategic behaviours illicitly designed to influence a particular other person concerning the attractiveness of one’s personal qualities’. There is no negative connotation associated with the word, ‘ingratiation’; indeed it is a normal part of all human interaction.

Moreover, this research examines the impact that impression management has on critical upward feedback, with particular emphasis on ingratiation, whereby individuals seek to be viewed as agreeable or credible by employing conforming and gratifying behaviours. In doing so, employees modify their feedback to their managers accordingly. Previous research has focused on interpersonal aspects of ingratiation and reveals that individuals using ingratiation achieve high levels of career success and attainment (Judge and Bretz, 1994). This research focuses on the dynamics of ingratiation processes and the manner in which they regulate the pulse of upward communication in an organisational setting, which in turn impacts on organisational effectiveness.

Downs and Conrad (1982) and Downs and Hazen (1992) found that subordinates were often reluctant to bring bosses bad news. Whether employees have the freedom or not, to initiate communication with superiors, characterizes how they perceive the communication climate: ‘Upward communication also sets the tone for organisational climate... There is an old observation that no one wants to be

the bearer of bad news... People felt negatively associated with bad news or criticism... Being able to communicate upward openly gives one a stake in the organisation and promotes a sense of dignity or importance' (Downs and Adrian, 2004: 54).

The issues involved in the dynamics of communication between the superordinate and the subordinate are a universal and natural part of human interaction and are not restricted to organisational life, as the following examples highlight:

1.2 Upward Communication Gone Amiss

1.2.1 Kissinger

The disinclination of leaders to listen to critical upward communication from their staff is a universal feature in many arenas, be they political, academic or technical.

For instance, both Nixon and Kissinger tended to be evasive when dealing with subordinates 'because they were unwilling to share either information or credit' (Isaacson, 1992: 140). Just as Kissinger said of Bismarck that he could 'never have accepted the good faith of any opponent', so it was that Nixon and Kissinger 'invariably assigned sinister motives to anyone who challenged them' (Isaacson, 1992: 140)

As Isaacson (1992: 187) said, 'Perhaps to a small degree, Nixon would have been Nixon, with or without Kissinger at his side. There were plenty of people around Nixon - including Secretary of State William Rogers - who practiced a more open and forthright style; but the president quickly shunted them aside in favour of those more comfortable with being devious'. Leaders in all realms are often reluctant to accept critical upward communication from their people, but are often

elated at hearing favourable endorsements from their juniors. This is in keeping with the self - efficacy bias, which comes from a key element in Bandura's (1978, 1993, 1994, 1997) social learning theory and refers to one's often exaggerated belief in one's own capability to perform tasks, that also impacts on one's thought patterns and emotional reactions. This has been neatly summarised in a Japanese proverb, 'Though you see the seven defects of others, we do not see our own ten defects'.

Isaacson (1992: 147) wrote that, 'As a refugee with a full share of the insecurities and ambitions that come from being a smart outsider, Kissinger ... could manoeuvre, amuse, impress, and occasionally dazzle. But more important, at least in the strange case of Richard Nixon, he learned how to flatter.' Kissinger's entire demeanour would change whenever he was talking to the President; he was so deferential that he seemed like a totally different person.

1.2.3 The Challenger

The human attribute to suppress critical and often negative information from the superior has had disastrous consequences, such as the Challenger tragedy in 1986. After the catastrophe, a special communication and culture survey at NASA, revealed a dismaying gap between declaratory rhetoric and management's credibility as seen from the bottom up. (C.A.I.B., 2003, online). The survey documented many strengths of NASA's culture but also recorded a failure to communicate, and a reluctance of many in the ranks to speak out. The report revealed that employees at the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) believed that speaking up about a perceived safety issue could seriously jeopardize their careers. This is reflective of the dangers of retaliation that

employees fear from management in case their upward communication is not favourably received, a concept that has been explored and endorsed by Milliken et al., (2003).

The survey found that the organizational structure and hierarchy of NASA blocked the effective communication of technical problems. Signals were overlooked, people were manipulated and silenced and useful information and dissenting views on technical issues did not surface at higher levels, resulting in a reprehensible disaster.

1.2.4 Fleeing from Saigon

In 1975, during the last days of the collapse of the American presence in Vietnam, Frank Snepp, a young CIA analyst with the US Embassy in Saigon repeatedly tried to convince the US Ambassador, Graham Martin, that it was time to make an exit plan. The intelligence arriving from one of the CIA's best agents in the north indicated that there was no chance of a negotiated settlement. Martin was an ageing cold warrior; he had deeply personal reasons for refusing to accept defeat in Vietnam, having lost a son to the war. 'I don't believe you', he said, 'I have better intelligence.' He cut off all military briefings. He refused to receive anything that contradicted his wishful thinking. The consequences of Martin's refusal were chaos and catastrophe. As Alan Carter, Director of Information service in Saigon said, 'In Vietnam we got out as badly as we got in'(The Guardian, G2 Magazine, 28.04.05).

1.2.5 Rumsfeld and McNamara

In the dark ages, the bearer of unfavourable tidings was nearly always beheaded. In recent times, he is arbitrarily and swiftly dispensed with. More recently, the world watched as President Bush announced Rumsfeld's resignation as the Defence Secretary of the U.S.

President Bush had said that he intended to hear all advice before making decisions about changes in Iraq strategy, even as it was disclosed that Rumsfeld had called for major changes in tactics two days before he resigned as Defence Secretary. Rumsfeld had advised the President to rethink the U.S. military mission and goals. Clearly, the President was not pleased and Bush proclaimed Rumsfeld's impending departure the day after Democrats won control of the House and Senate.

This is not dissimilar to the manner in which McNamara was dispensed with when he advised Lyndon Johnson to pull back in the Vietnam War. In May, 1967, McNamara, the technocrat manager extraordinaire who had run out of solutions for the war, performed an act of abundant moral courage - he gave the President of the United States a memorandum saying that the U.S. could not win the war in Vietnam and ought to negotiate a favourable peace (Sheenan, 1990).

Lyndon Johnson was not pleased. He had invested his place in history and close to 11,000 American lives in the Vietnam War. 'He began to put Robert McNamara at a distance' (Sheenan, 1990: 685). In November, 1967, McNamara gave the President a memorandum elaborating his dissent and advised Johnson to halt the bombing of North Vietnam by the end of the year. Lyndon Johnson was annoyed.

At the end of November, McNamara learned through a press leak of his new appointment as the President of the World Bank. Quietly during November, without telling McNamara, Lyndon Johnson had arranged for his departure from the White House (Sheenan, 1990).

1.2.6 Tony Blair

In the present political scene in the U.K., when Tony Blair was urged to resign as the leader of the Labour Party in 2006, it was noted how he sidelined Stan Greenberg, ‘the distinguished U.S. pollster he had hired, dismissing him as ‘obsessed about Iraq’’. ‘He shot the messenger who brought the bad news that the fallout from Iraq has done for trust in Blair, permanently and irredeemably’ (Toynbee, 2006, The Guardian online).

1.2.7 Birmingham University

Furthermore, the negative effects of working in a ‘punitive environment’ were recently revealed at Birmingham University (The Times Higher Education Supplement, 21 January 2007: 4)

The report identifies a number of key issues: ‘Leadership and management style is at the heart of much of the unhappiness that was expressed by the majority of respondents’. Many members of the School of Health Sciences had been afraid to raise their concerns with the university for fear of victimisation. ‘A clear split emerges between a minority of staff - described as an ‘inner circle’ - and the majority who feel bullied, isolated and discriminated against. Some staff said feedback and performance management were ‘punitive’ and nearly all considered communications to be poor...’

Some 47 staff in the school, including 41 academics, participated in the survey held in October 2005. They reported the school suffered from a blaming culture and an unrewarding social climate, and that they suffered low autonomy and insufficient participation. *See Appendix 2: Birmingham University and The Culture Of Fear.*

1.2.8 ABB

The more successful leaders become, the more reluctant followers become to challenge their decisions. Writing about the rushed exit of Percy Barnevik, the former CEO of the Swiss conglomerate, ABB Blumen (2005: 148) wrote,

‘Even as dark shadows began to creep up in the form of rash and foolhardy decisions made in a spirit of over-confidence, followers frequently refrained from openly criticising the leader’s plans. Because followers are reluctant to confront the leader about a flawed decision, the leader becomes emboldened to continue on a misguided path. This becomes a vicious cycle, with the pattern becoming entrenched in the communication patterns of the subordinate and the supervisor.’

At ABB, employees privately grumbled about Barnevik’s decentralised matrix structure but publicly applauded it; there was virtually no public debate about the difficulties.

‘When multiple followers fail to protest a leader’s questionable behaviour, they are opening the door for the leader to step over the toxicity threshold’ (Blumen, 2005: 148). In these all too rare cases, when a sole critic steps forward, the leader may not take criticism simply because no one else supports the dissenter. ‘In fact, when only one intrepid messenger delivers the bad news, that individual, like the sentry who carried grim tidings to Creon in Sophocles Antigone, may barely escape with his or her life’ (Blumen 2005: 148).

1.3 Conclusion

Many of the examples mentioned here are not from the organisational milieu but are generally representative of the communication dynamic between the superior and those that they manage in any setting. This study proceeds to explore in detail precisely how subordinates in organisations communicate with those in managerial positions, particularly when such communication is critical in nature, and to illuminate the mechanisms whereby conformity, ingratiation and impression management are manifest in such communicative processes.

CHAPTER 2

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter begins with a brief introduction to the *raison d'être* of the research, the dynamics of upward communication within organisations and how the mechanisms of ingratiation theory (Jones, 1964) and impression management (Feldman and Kilch, 1991) might impact on its pulse, form and flow. The role of upward communication is investigated in depth as an important determinant of staff management relationships. Building on this, the chapter proceeds to explore the different facets of organisational dissent, employee voice and silence, where seminal papers in the research are compared, discussed and appraised. Furthermore, the implications of trust and social capital in the tide of upward communication are considered. The chapter also assesses the impact of distance and role of the romance of leadership theory in debating whether the leader or the follower sets the tone for upward communication within the organisation. The latter part of the literature review evaluates the possible influence of the factors of ingratiation theory (Jones, 1964) and impression management (Goffman, 1959) in shaping upward influence tactics used by employees to communicate with their supervisors.

This literature review provides a context for the thesis; it assesses and critiques the existing research and furthermore, develops a knowledge and understanding of the theories and concepts involved. Moreover, it informs the research question of this study and in doing so, demonstrates a link between the literature and the

research proposition. *See Appendix 3: Doing the Literature Review and Appendix 4: The Flow of the Literature Review.*

2.1.2 Upward Communication in Organisations

“I want someone to tell me,” Lieutenant Scheisskopf beseeched them all prayerfully. “If any of it is my fault, I want to be told.”

“He wants someone to tell him,” Clevinger said.

“He wants everyone to keep still, you idiot”, Yossarian answered.

“Didn’t you hear him?” Clevinger argued.

“I heard him. “ Yossarian said. “I heard him say very loudly and very distinctly that he wants every one of us to keep our mouth shut if we know what is good for us.”

“I won’t punish you,” Lieutenant Scheisskopf swore.

“He says he won’t punish me,” said Clevinger.

‘He’ll castrate you,” said Yossarian

“I swear I won’t punish you,” said Lieutenant Scheisskopf. “I’ll be grateful to the man who tells me the truth.”

“He’ll hate you,” said Yossarian. ‘To his dying day, he’ll hate you.’”

From ‘Catch-22’, (1970), Joseph Heller.

‘Communication is ...a central component of effective business operations’ (Hargie et al., 2004: 5). Within the ambit of the organisation, communication ‘has been variously described as:

- its life blood
- its oxygen
- its brain
- its central nervous system
- its arteries
- the highways along which its business is transacted
- the mortar/glue which binds its parts together
- the fuel that drives its engine’ (Hargie et al, 2004: 5).

Moreover, 'the tools of communication are an organisation's most vital resource in the daily battle for organisational survival' (Hargie and Tourish, 2000: xiv).

Therefore, the role of internal communication is an important determinant of the overall quality of staff management relationships of any organisation. Employee feedback is of the essence of this process (McAleese and Hargie, 2004).

'Yet when it comes to communications with staff, feedback is often seen as a top-down process...furthermore it is clear that employees attach considerable significance to upwards communication. In particular, they wish to report on initiatives taken in their area and request any information necessary for them to do their jobs effectively...There ought to be a climate where bottom up communication is fostered and viewed as positive' (Hargie et al., 2004: 13).

In recognition of this, during the past few decades, there has been a recognisable proclivity towards increasingly more participative organisational and practices. Tourish (2005: 487) has argued, 'Communication is consistently recognised as an integral part of participative processes and its role in these has been widely studied.' Moreover, Hargie and Tourish (2000; xvi) emphasized, 'Communication breakdowns are always a barometer of greater storms and mishaps ahead.' Furthermore, 'Upward communication supports participative management and employee contributions to the organisation goals' (McClelland, 1988: 124).

Upward communication has been defined in a variety of ways. Kreitner (1995: 378) defined it as 'employees sharing with management their thoughts and ideas.' Miller et al., (1994: 88) described it as 'the flow of messages from employees to managers.' Green and Knippen (1999: 4) provided an 'employee definition of upward communication', which is:

‘Employees communicate upward to:

1. understand managers
2. work with managers
3. ask managers, and
4. help managers.’

However, the role of informal upward communication often continues to be sidelined within organisations, especially when it concerns feedback that is critical of managerial precepts. This results in a situation whereby ‘Superiors are often cut off from essential information because subordinates conceal their real feelings and opinions out of a fear that forthright disclosure will lead to some form of punishment’ (Gemmill, 2001:25).

Deficient upward communication could result in information about underlying problems in the organisation being lost and thus ‘create serious distortions in the knowledge on which managers base their decisions...Thus, silence about important issues can compromise an organization’s ability to detect errors and engage in learning... These outcomes can have serious long-term consequences for the employees and their relationships with the organization’ (Milliken et al., 2003: 1473). Senge (1994) argued that openness is therefore critical to organizational learning ‘Effective management depends on open communication, and requires an interpersonal style characterised by warmth, candour, supportiveness and a commitment to dialogue rather than monologue’ (Hargie et

al., 2000: 5). *See Appendix 5: The Benefits of Upward Communication (Tourish and Hargie, 2004: 190)*

An influential review of the literature on upward communication noted that ‘communication upward from subordinate to superior is reported to take four primary forms:

- (a) information about the subordinate himself/herself
 - (b) information about co-workers and their problems
 - (c) information about organizational practices and policies
 - (d) information about what needs to be done and how it can be done’
- (Jablin, 1979: 1202).

Speaking up in the workplace has been titled ‘employee voice’, ‘issue selling’, ‘whistle-blowing’, ‘championing’, ‘dissent’ and ‘boat rocking’ (Dutton and Ashford, 1993; Kassing, 2001; Miceli and Bear, 1992; Parker et al., 1995; Saunders et al., 1992; Withey and Cooper, 1989; Fenn and Yankelovich, 2000; Fenn and Head, 1965). More fundamentally, communication tends to mainly flow from the superordinate to the subordinates (Luthans and Larsen, 1986). On the other hand, many organizations now suffer from information overload, sometimes termed *infoglut or data smog* (Edmunds and Morris, 2000). Nonetheless, motivating and realising open upward communication is widely recognized as a serious problem in organisations (Chow et al., 2000).

Employees, therefore, face a choice of remaining quiet, articulating a supportive (i.e. conformist) voice or a dissenting voice to managers. Tourish and Robson

(2006) have presented a model on supportive and dissenting voice. They argued that supportive voice, to which low risks but high rewards are attached, generates a strong flow of communication to managers. This is in turn reinforced, encouraged and rewarded:

‘Mismatched perceptions therefore have iatrogenic consequences – i.e. problems arise that are caused by the treatment regime prescribed by managers, and which flow from misdiagnosis, rather than from a pre-existing condition. On the other hand, where employees choose to articulate dissent, they tend to do so mildly, since dissent carries high risks and attracts low rewards. Dissent is therefore expressed in a weak flow of communication to management’ (Tourish and Robson, 2006: 714).

Nonetheless, this creates a strong flow of downward communication from managers to the dissenters, in the form of messages and actions which penalize dissent and is therefore seen as retaliation. Ultimately, employees may elect to remain completely silent (Milliken et al., 2003). This phenomenon has been widely researched. *See Appendix 6: Supportive and Dissenting Voice In Upward Communication*

In a study of 20 firms facing a crisis, Dunbar and Goldberg (1978) found that many top managers surrounded themselves with admirers. Such people protect leaders at the top from muted warnings from middle managers who report problems. When top managers therefore remain oblivious of such potential difficulties, they risk driving their organisation ‘through a red light’ (Wissema, 2002: 522).

As Kets de Vries said (2001: 93),

‘It is clear then, that when people in positions of leadership... say, “I’d like some constructive criticism,” what they often mean is, “I want to hear some praise.” It’s also clear that when executives *do* get honest feedback,

they often penalize the speaker. As the old adage says, “Tell the boss what you think and the truth will set you free” – free from employment, that is. But the consequences of lying aren’t any better. The irony is that whether employees lie or tell the truth, double- bind communication – communication that sends both a *tell* and a *don’t tell* message – leads to the suppression of conflict and false consensus, prevents mutual confidence and initiative, and leads to decision paralysis.’

This sensitivity towards negative feedback can be readily understood. The automatic cognitive system of all human beings directs attention toward negative stimuli. This has been called the ‘automatic vigilance effect’ where ‘people evaluate good and bad information at different rates’ (Pratto and John, 1991: 380). Automatic vigilance may lead to a negative bias in evaluation and also suggest a selective recollection of negative information (Fedor et al., 2001). This theory can be related to threat-rigidity theory, which says that ‘a threat to the vital interests of an entity . . . will lead to forms of rigidity’ (Staw et al., 1981: 502).

These theories suggest that one of a human being’s most fundamental needs, in most relational contexts, is to present a positive face to others, an important facet of impression management (Goffman, 1959), and to be reassured that the perceptions of others reflect the same positive image as one views oneself (Hargie and Tourish, 1997, Ashford et al., 1998). Critical feedback would, therefore, appear to threaten this need. Therefore, when managers are faced with critical upward communication, they are unlikely receive it in a positive manner, stay open to new ideas or encourage challenges to existing practices. Negative feedback can and may impact adversely upon one’s public and personal image (Atwater et al., 1995, 2000). Thus, people at all organizational levels are often fearful about seeking feedback on their performance (Ashford and Northcraft, 1992). They believe this might well leave them vulnerable to predators within the

ruthless survival games of the organisational jungle. Furthermore, to deny fault and avert the possibility of blame, senior managers sometimes conceal negative organizational outcomes (Abrahamson and Park, 1994).

Argyris and Schon (1978) suggested that this fear of feedback may be especially strong among organisational managers. They argue that many managers, like all human beings, feel a strong need to avoid embarrassment, threat, and feelings of vulnerability or incompetence. Hence, they tend to avoid any information that might suggest weakness or that might raise questions about contemporary courses of action. It has been shown that when negative feedback comes from below, rather than from above, it is seen as less accurate and legitimate (Ilgen et al., 1979) and as more threatening to one's power and credibility (Korsgaard, Roberson, and Rymph, 1998). Morrison and Milliken (2000) stressed that the creation of an ambience of silence in organizations is caused by the fear of senior managers of receiving negative feedback, especially from subordinates. There is strong evidence that people often feel threatened by negative feedback, whether this information is about them personally or about a course of action with which they identify (Carver, Antonio, and Scheier, 1985; Meyer and Starke, 1982; Swann and Read, 1981). Therefore, managers in organisations try to avoid facing negative feedback (Ashford and Cummings, 1983), and when they do receive it, they may try to ignore the message, dismiss it as uninformed, or even confront its credibility (Ilgen, Fisher, and Taylor, 1979).

As Tourish and Robson (2006: 717) have emphasized, 'The implications for organizational functioning are profound. The absence of critical upward

communication reinforces the view of those at the top that their opinions are more widely shared and accepted than they are.’ In turn, this drives management behaviours which may prove harmful to the interests of the organization (Vatcha and Tourish, 2003). The principle of social proof (Cialdini, 2001), whereby personal opinion is determined by concurring with what other people think is correct, or consensual validation, where subjective personal perceptions are replaced by adapted social patterns (Zebrowitz, 1990), may be factors that persuade managers that their views are more extensively accepted and shared than what they really might be. With such a conviction in place, it is yet more likely that ingratiation tactics will be well regarded but that dissent will be viewed as resistance to be overcome rather than useful feedback that so happens to be different to the managers’ own views (Lewis, 1992; Michener et al., 1979).

2.1.2 The Cognitive Framework and the Employee

Organisations may be viewed as ‘collections of people trying to make sense of what is happening around them’ (Weick, 2001: 5). From the perception of this study, ‘It follows that equivocation, and hence conflicted understandings of how others behave, is central to organizational life. These efforts at sensemaking are expressed in stories, shaped either as interior monologues or exchanged with others, and hence refined through the process of collective dialogue’ (Tourish and Robson, 2006: 717). As such, ‘they do not simply present information or facts about “events”, but they enrich, enhance, and infuse facts with meaning’ (Gabriel, 2000: 135).

Furthermore, in as much as narratives are styles of talking about life within organizations, they depict perceptions that people have of organizing (Weick, 1979; Weick and Browning, 1986). They help human beings in the organisation to understand their world by providing an understanding that guides action (Weick, 1995). Indeed, according (Boland and Tenkasi, 1995), narratives and storytelling are often considered to be the basic fundamentals of human cognition (Boland and Tenkasi, 1995, Dowling 2006).

Accordingly, interpretation is central to sensemaking (Fairhurst, 2007). People within the organisational milieu form different perceptions and attribute dissimilar meanings to diverse social situations (Hatch and Yanow, 2003). However, a person's position within the structure of the organisation influences the process of interpretation and sensemaking. Positive feedback therefore feels naturally convincing to superiors, while unattractive critical feedback impairs their romanticized self image naturally seems unconvincing and incorrect (Tourish and Hargie, 2004).

2.1.3 Organizational Climate

The concept of organisational climate was first developed by Lewin, Lippitt and White (1939). Organizational climate has been defined as the 'relatively enduring quality of the internal environment of an organization that a) is experienced by its members, b) influences their behaviour, and c) can be described in terms of the values of a particular set of characteristics (or attitudes) of the organization' (Taguiri and Litwin, 1968: 27). Researchers have since emphasized that work settings have numerous climates, each pertaining to a particular type of activity

The term organizational climate is used to refer to the shared perceptions of those aspects of a particular work environment that relate to the employees' psychological needs (Ashforth, 1985; Schneider and Reichers, 1983) and may be gauged in terms of trust, morale, conflict, equity, leader credibility and resistance to change (Koys and DeCotiis, 1991). It is influenced by forces both external and internal to the organization (Falcione et al., 1987). Furthermore, it consists of such issues as supportiveness, participative decision making, confidence and credibility, and levels of openness and candour (Redding, 1972, 1979). One of the key issues in determining organisational climate is, therefore, the degree of the openness and transparency of communication within the organisation, particularly communication between managers and their subordinates.

Such openness would relate to both message sending and message receiving (Dansereau and Markham, 1987). However, it has been recognized that employees are prone to distort the messages they transmit upwards, with negative effects on organizational climate and function (Athanassiades, 1973). Consequently, managers often have different perceptions on straightforward topics as subordinates' basic job duties (Jablin, 1979) and whether and to what extent people are involved in decision making (Harrison, 1985). In particular, organizational silence has been viewed as 'a collective phenomenon where

employees withhold their opinions and concerns about potential organizational problems' (Van Dyne et al., 2003: 1364, Milliken et al., 2003).

Beer and Eisenstat (2000) maintained that barriers to strategic implementation of communication or any other form of strategic change can be understood through the lens of resistance to change. Often, both managers and employees will often assume defensive routines that protect their existing ways of doing things and that prevent them from considering changes. Employees decide to minimize voicing negative feelings in public and keep their thoughts and feelings to themselves, to avoid any disagreeable confrontations with top management. An 'organizational silence' results; concerns about organizational difficulties are suppressed. Ultimately, this impacts on change processes; it prevents top management finding out about underlying causes to the obstacles their organization is facing. Many organizations do indeed send the message that those who express concerns will be severely punished (Perlow and Williams, 2003).

An analysis of this issue revealed the following six barriers, a set of symptoms that prevent managers from resolving the ubiquitous problem of having to align their organizations with changes in strategy:

1. Unclear strategy and/or conflicting priorities
2. An ineffective top management team
3. A leadership style that is too top-down or, conversely, too laissez-faire
4. Poor coordination across functions, businesses, or geographic regions
5. Inadequate leadership skills and development of down-the-line leaders
6. Poor vertical communication (Perlow and Williams, 2003).

See Appendix 7: Quality of Implementation.

Therefore, upward feedback within organisations can often be distorted and repressed. The problem can become endemic, aided by managers' schemas like 'denial, rationalisation, sense of entitlement, and ego aggrandisement' (Brown, 1997: 643), through which managers nurture a positive sense of self, and often embrace self-protective behaviours such as disapproving of or ignoring critical feedback.

However, 'non-managers also engage in sensemaking to advance their own interests. (Tourish and Robson, 2006: 721). Research has found that the establishment of influence is one of the most dominant impulses that drive much upward communication (Kipnis and Schmidt, 1988). If a subordinate gains the confidence of his/her superior by straightforward means or manipulation, the superior would, most likely, respond favourably to the subordinate's communication. This is a form of influence labelled in the literature as 'soft' (Yukl and Falbe, 1992). Often, subordinates attempt to charm themselves into the favour of those of higher power positions going out of their way to deliberately conform to management standpoints (Jones, 1990; Kassing, 2001; Rosenfeld et al., 1995; Giacalone and Rosenfeld, 1986), through skilful impression management and ingratiation. This can have a detrimental effect on organisational performance and decision making. As De Vries (2001: 94) has emphasised, 'Effective organizational functioning demands that people have a healthy disrespect for their boss, feel free to express emotions and opinions openly, and

are comfortable engaging in banter and give and take.’ This research is essentially a study of the opportunity for, and barriers to, the creation of such a climate.

2.1.4 Semco , Distinctive and Unique

Mention needs to be made of Semco of Brazil, that ‘has made its name by standing the conventional corporate rulebook on its head’ (Caulkin, 2003, The Observer, April 27th, 2003). Semco has survived Brazil’s rough economic and political currents with verve and panache, growing at between 30 and 40 per cent a year.

The philosophy of Semco is built on worker participation and involvement, on advancing opinions, seeking opportunities and advancement. Semler (2004), the founder of the company, believed that sustainability and productivity are a product of worker balance; balance ensues when people are given room, realize their potential and merge their personal aspirations with the goals of the organisation. As part of this philosophy, candid and open communication is the norm.

Semco thus, embodies ideals of trusting workers implicitly, sharing power and information, encouraging dissent and celebrating democracy. Semler (2004) maintained that dissent and democracy go hand in hand. Dissent or ‘civil disobedience’ is ‘not an early sign of revolution but a clear indication of commonsense at work’ (Semler, 1989: 80). Furthermore, decisions arising from debate are implemented much more efficiently because alternatives, objections and uncertainties have already been voiced and discussed. ‘We want our workers to behave like adults, so we stopped treating them as adolescents’ (Semler, 1989: 79).

In this milieu, 'upward communication can be viewed as a step on the escalator of participation' (Tourish, 2005: 488).

2.1.5 Conclusion

The Dibb Lupton Alsop Industrial Relations Survey is an authoritative, independent survey of its kind published in Britain, and it provides a benchmark against which industrial relations can be measured. It found that in 2003, nearly two-thirds of employers (61%) now claim to hold regular consultations with staff. The move to give a voice to employees is supported by a European Information and Consultation directive, which is due to come into force from 2005, whereby employers will be obliged to introduce a formal policy of staff consultation to do so by 10% of their staff. Research has long suggested that people are more likely to be committed to a course of action if they are involved in the decision making process that gives rise to it. 'Critical feedback, despite its frustrations, consistently offers fresh opportunities for evaluation' (Tourish, 2005: 497). The articulation of employee voice is therefore a vital ingredient of empowerment and involvement.

2.2 Silence, Trust and Cynicism

'I can hear the silence

And through it individual voices...'

Eva Figs (1987)

2.2.1 Introduction

This section discusses some of the seminal insights of research on organisational silence, trust and cynicism. It is essential to 'understand more about how people in organizations make the decision to speak (or be silent) about issues or problems that concern them at work, what types of issues employees are likely to be silent about ... and how organizations can help create conditions that facilitate the upward transfer of information about problems or issues' (Milliken et al., 2003: 1563). Researchers have referred to this as employee silence (Morrison and Milliken, 2000). As their research argued,

'the decisions to remain silent spanned across a variety of issues: performance problems, pay inequity, ethical concerns and so forth...In deciding whether or not to remain silent, it appears that the respondents focused on potential negative outcomes or risks that they associated with speaking up, and their responses suggest that the desire to avoid these negative outcomes played an important part in decisions to be silent' (Morrison and Milliken et al., 2003: 1565).

Perlow and Williams (2003: 3) in their study on employee silence examined the factors that make silence so prevalent in organisations:

'Thanks to deeply ingrained rules of etiquette, people silence themselves to avoid embarrassment, confrontation, and other perceived dangers. The social virtues of silence are reinforced by our survival instincts. Many organisations send the message – verbally or nonverbally – that falling into line is the safest way to hold our job and further our careers.'

On the same lines as the studies of Milliken and Morrison (2003), Perlow and Williams (2003) reiterated that:

‘... public recognition of a few people does not mean that speaking out is necessarily viewed as courageous or praiseworthy. Most individuals who go against their organisations or express their concerns publicly are severely punished. If they are not fired outright, they are marginalized and made to feel irrelevant.’

Van Dynne (2003) believed that employees often have insights and bright ideas about how the organisation might be improved. Sometimes they exercise voice and express their ideas, information, and opinions; and other times they remain silent and withhold their ideas. He differentiated between three types of silence (Acquiescent Silence, (silence to show consent), Defensive Silence (silence to show non-agreement), and Pro-Social Silence) (going along with the silence of the majority/public opinion) and three parallel types of voice (Acquiescent Voice, (conformity), Defensive Voice, (temperate disagreement) and Pro-Social Voice (going along with the opinion of the majority)).

Noelle-Neumann (1974, 1977, 1979, 1983, 1984, 1991), explained how majority opinions become dominant over time and minority opinions weakened. Her phrase ‘spiral of silence’ actually referred to how people tend to remain silent when they feel that their views are not supported by the majority. She referred to a ‘quasi-statistical organ,’ an intuitive sixth-sense which allows them to know the prevailing public opinion. Moreover, people have a fear of isolation and know what behaviours will increase their likelihood of being socially isolated. In organisations, employees are reticent to express their minority views, primarily out of fear of being isolated. Spirals of silence within groups can restrict the open and honest discussion that is essential to organizational improvement. *See Appendix 8: Noelle-Neumann (1974, 1985, and 1991) and the Spirals of Silence.*

In a recent study on employee silence, Detert (2007: 24) investigated why employee silence is present in organisational life. The answer was:

‘In a phrase, self-preservation. While it’s obvious why employees fear bringing up certain issues, such as whistle-blowing, we found the innate protective instinct so powerful that it also inhibited speech that clearly would have been intended to help the organization...the perceived risks of speaking up felt very personal and immediate to employees, whereas the possible future benefit to the organization from sharing their ideas was uncertain. So people often instinctively played it safe by keeping quiet.’

Premeaux and Bedian (1993), like Milliken et al., (2003), have suggested that many employees are hesitant to express their opinions or voice their views because doing so might lead to retaliation. Consequently, they remain silent rather than speak up about office encounters, actions or ideas and issues. The results of this study revealed that low self-monitors, (people with a lower level of awareness of their behaviour and its impact on others) in comparison to high self-monitors (people with a higher level of awareness of their behaviour and its impact on others), spoke up more often as internal locus of control, self-esteem, top-management openness, and trust in supervisor increased (Baron and Ganz, 1972). These results correspond to the part played by the external and internal loci of control in upward influence tactics that employees use when communicating with their supervisors (Ralston, 1985) and which will be discussed later.

2.2.3 Further Models on Employee Silence

Mindful of the need to restore employee rights in the ‘humanistic organization’ (Larkin, 1986: 36), Kassing (1998: 214) maintained that displaced dissent may be a more trait - like behaviour than articulated and latent dissent which may be influenced more by organizational and relational factors: ‘People may be less

likely to express their opinions within organizations due to apprehensive communication tendencies or different attitudes about work.’ Festinger et al. (1950: 428) have noted that ‘structuring groups into hierarchies automatically creates constraints against free communication.’ Often organizations are intolerant of criticism, discord or dissent and negative consequences may result for the employee who speaks up. Moreover, Glauser (1984) suggests that upward communication is further affected by the nature of the supervisor-subordinate relationship. The quality of the employee’s relationship with the supervisor therefore is significant when examining the flow of upward communication

One reason why people are sometimes silent about their concerns may be what psychologists have termed ‘the mum effect’ (Rosen and Tesser, 1970). Research on the mum effect has revealed that individuals have a reluctance to convey negative information because of the discomfort associated with being the conveyer of bad news (Conlee and Tesser, 1973, Heath, 1996, Tesser et al., 1972). In organisations there is evidence to show that employees are specially awkward conveying information about potential problems or issues to those above them and therefore often distort and warp the information they convey to their superiors, communicating in a manner that disguises negative information (Athansiadis, 1973; Roberts and O’Reilly, 1974; O’Reilly et al., 1987). In as much as this is so, ‘the hierarchical relationship between subordinate and supervisor appears to intensify the mum effect’ (Milliken et al., 2003: 1455).

Research on the issue has found that employees decide whether to raise strategic issues with top management by ‘reading the context’ for clues concerning

‘context favourability’ (Ashford et al., 1998; Dutton et al., 1997, 2002). A favourable context is described as one where management is perceived to be willing to listen, the culture that is seen as generally supportive and there is relatively little uncertainty. For example, whistle blowers are often viewed as traitors and can suffer negative career outcomes as a result of their calling attention to organisational wrong doing. Research suggests that employees weigh these costs when considering whether to speak up or remain silent (Dutton et al., 1997; Bear and Miceli, 1992). As Heifetz and Laurie (1997:129) observed in their study of leadership, ‘whistle-blowers, creative deviants and other such original voices routinely get smashed and silenced in organizational life.’

Employees are often reluctant to share information that could be interpreted as negative or threatening to those above them in an organisational hierarchy (Roberts and O’Reilly, 1974; Ryan and Oestreish, 1991). This reluctance to speak up, and the silence or information withholding that it gives rise to, have the potential to undermine organisational decision making and error-correction and to damage employee trust and morale (Agyris and Schon, 1986; Beer and Eisenstadt, 2000; Janis, 1982; Morrison and Milliken, 2000; Tamuz, 2001). ‘For instance, Enron employees had concerns about the firm’s activities long before it went down, but were afraid to speak to their bosses about these concerns (Cruver, 2003). According to the testimony of Sherron Watkins, there was a culture of ‘intimidation at Enron where there was widespread knowledge of the company’s shaky finances’, yet no one felt confident enough to raise these issues’ (Milliken et al., 2003: 1456). *See Appendix 9: Time Magazine, December, 30, 2002: Persons of the Year, 2002.*

In her study, Milliken et al., (2003) interviewed 40 employees in an ‘unspecified range’ of industries. The respondents were asked whether they were comfortable expressing their views and feelings about issues, what the issues usually were, the reasons for not raising them and whether they believed that the same silent syndrome was shared by their co-workers. Milliken’s findings (2003) established that being silent about issues and problems at work is a very common experience with 85% of the sample saying that, on at least one occasion, they had felt unable to raise an issue or concern to their bosses even though they felt that the issue was important. Only half (51%) of the respondents indicated that, generally speaking they felt comfortable speaking up about issues or concerns in their current organizations. 27% of the sample said that they would only speak to certain people or only about certain issues. Eight categories of issues were identified as concerns about which employees chose to remain silent. 37% of the sample identified performance of a colleague or boss as a topic they would not choose to raise. 35% believed that they would not speak up about organizational processes or performance. 27% had to do with concerns about pay.

Moreover, a variety of personal, organizational and relationship characteristics were identified that influenced their decision to remain silent: ‘We regard these factors as exogenous to the decision but having an effect on how the employee will view the potential outcomes’ (Milliken et al., 2003: 1469). Highlighting the ‘social dimension’ of silence, Morrison and Milliken (2000: 706) emphasized the ‘collective dynamics’ that encourage employees to remain silent en masse and suggest that silence is often a ‘collective phenomenon.’ Would the same factors

hold true for the collective dynamics of voice? Theories of self categorization and social identity describe how the self is not only defined in individual terms but also in terms of group or organisational memberships (Sedikides and Brewer, 2001, Tajfel and Turner, 1986). Hence, 'This self-definition in collective terms is reflected in the concept of social or organisational identification, the perception of oneness, of self and group' (van Knippenberg and Schippers, 2007: 54).

In as much as reputation and character are important in the organisation context, Ashford and Humphrey (1995) have highlighted the power of labels in the organisation. They have argued that when an employee is labelled, he/she is assigned to a special nomenclature, which activates a schema. This process of labelling can have an enormous impact because these labels are communicated to others and an unfavourable reputation developed. Other employees begin to regards the label as a valid characterisation of the employee. Therefore, 'Labelling alters interpersonal interactions, changes social identity and creates self-fulfilling prophecies that seemingly validate the labels (Ashford and Humphrey, 1995, Milliken et al., 2003). *See Appendix 10: The Effect of Labels (Milliken et al., 2003).*

Milliken et al (2003) used their results to construct a Social and Relational Model of Silence, (2003: 1470). When an employee is labelled (as a 'troublemaker' for instance), this process of categorization proceeds to have an enormous impact because the label is regarded as a valid and enduring characterization of the employee (Ashford and Humphrey, 1995). Concerns about speaking up therefore have relational implications based on concerns of self-perception and damaging

valued relationships. Milliken et al.,’s model, (similar to the subjective expected utility calculus developed by Vroom, 1964) provided a deeper insight into the reasoning process employees use to determine whether it is safe to speak up. The main fears or anticipated negative outcomes are identified and lead on to the most likely probability of the employee choosing to remain silent:

- The fear of being labelled in a negative manner
- The fear of damaging one’s image
- The fear of damaging relationships and losing relational currency
- The fear of retaliation or punishment

See Appendix 11: Milliken et al.’s (2003) Social and Relational Model of Employee Silence.

In this model, Milliken et al. (2003) suggested that the underlying process of deciding to remain silent is similar to the subjective expected utility calculus that employees use when deciding to engage in any work behaviour (Vroom, 1964). As Milliken et al., (2003: 1468) expressed it, ‘Fear was an important theme in many interviews.’ Research shows that if individuals are experiencing a strong negative affective state such as fear, they are more likely to recall information consistent with that emotion, and so may overestimate the likelihood of negatives outcomes in the situation (Isen et al., 1978; McLeod, 1999; Nygren et al., 1966). This would suggest that if a subordinate is fearful about speaking up, he or she will most likely recall some information that confirms this fear, and as a result, ‘form exaggerated conclusions about the dangers of voicing one’s concerns (Morrison and Milliken, 2000).

Respondents in Milliken et al.'s (2003) study also pointed to a variety of personal characteristics, organisational characteristics and relationship characteristics that affected their decision to remain silent. She concluded:

'These three factors are exogenous to the decision process but as having an effect on how an employee will view the potential outcomes with raising a concern ... For example, relative to older, more experienced employees at higher organisational ranks, those who are young or inexperienced, or in lower organisational position, are likely to see the negative outcomes associated with speaking up as *moiré* probable since they have little power in the organisation. They may also fear that they lack the credibility to be taken seriously' (Milliken et al., 2003: 1467).

See Appendix 12: Table on Reasons why Employees Remain Silent (Morrison, 2003).

These findings also highlight the fact that silence has 'social dimensions' and emphasize the 'collective dynamics' that encourage employees to remain silent (Milliken et al., 2003: 1468). When employees join an organisation, they deduce the rules – what it is safe to discuss with one's superiors and what one should remain quiet about (Van Maanen and Schein, 1979). More significantly, large numbers of employees felt they were not alone in withholding information about their issues or concerns. These results suggest that silence is often a collective phenomenon (Morrison and Milliken, 2000). This dynamic has been explored in depth later in the literature review.

2.2.4 The Importance of Social Capital in Upward Communication

*... 'We will stand in time
To face the ties that bind...
Now you can't break the ties that bind.'*

Bruce Springsteen (1980)

Indeed, the ties that bind, the social relations that connect the members of the organisation to each other, are vitally important in shaping the tenor and pulse of communication takes place within the organisation. Nan Lin's (2001) concept of social capital explained how people can attain success in a social setting, such as an organisational milieu, through their favourable social relations that yielded high returns.

It is now accepted that skilled interpersonal communication plays a crucial part in the success of individuals (Coleman, 1988, Putnam, Leonardo and Nanetti, 1993; Hargie and Dickson, 2004). Networks, such as the relationship between the subordinate and the superior, provide a mechanism for the development of trust and legitimacy. This being so, the special relational artefact, 'social capital', is a significant element of upward communication within the organisation. If the quality of social interaction improves, people are more likely to communicate openly, frankly and pleasantly with one another and with their superiors, with positive results for them and for the organisation (Homans, 1951; 1961).

An important consideration in Milliken et al.,'s (2003) findings was the value of social capital or relational currency that stems from 'not from personal characteristics or assets, but from ties to others' and is foundation of smooth and open upward communication. (Milliken et al., 2003:1471). It may be thought of as resources (e.g. trust, goodwill) embedded in a social structure (Adler and Kwon, 2002, Bolino et al., 2002).

The first exposition of the term, social capital, was by Bourdieu (1983). Drawing on Coleman's (1988) development of the concept, Becker (1996) proceeded to distinguish between individual (personal capital) and social capital. Social capital facilitates career advancement and plays a vital role in focusing coordinated action in contexts where people need the trust and cooperation of others to achieve their own objectives (Burt, 1992). An actor within the organisation can have more or less social capital at his or her disposal as a function of their social network, tying that actor to others (Adler and Kwon, 2002).

Moreover, social capital, known to 'increase the efficiency of action', has been defined as 'the sum of the actual and potential resources embedded within, available through and derived from the network of relationships possessed by the individual or social unit' (Nahapiet and Goshal, 1998: 243). Anderson and Jack (2000, 2002) use an intriguing analogy of bridges to illustrate the effect of social capital. Nahapiet and Goshal (1998) have stated that social capital exists on three dimensions; structural (pertaining to the hierarchy and interconnection of network structures), cognitive (relating to intellectual capital) or relational. The relational dimension of social networking and communication refers to those assets and values created and 'leveraged' through relationships which people develop with

each other through a range of interactions (Nahapiet and Goshal, 1998: 245). Furthermore, Adler and Kwon (2002) have noted that social capital is not a given, it requires constant maintenance.

Milliken et al., (2003) suggest that fear of contaminating carefully accumulated social capital may be why employees are often reluctant to speak to their subordinate about issues or problems. Furthermore, research has indicated that most people keep in mind their public image before deciding whether or not to raise a potentially sensitive issue (Ashford et al., 1988).

2.2.5 The Impact of Silence on the Organisation

Milliken et al., (2003) focused on the cognitive, emotional and social processes that underlie employees' decisions to remain silent about work issues of concern.

However,

‘the danger in organisations is that the tendency of people to remain silent about information can result in large amounts of information about potential problems in the organisation being lost to senior managers. This can create serious distortions in the knowledge on which managers base their decisions... Thus silence about important issues can compromise and organisations ability to detect errors and engage in learning’ (Milliken et al., 2003: 1473).

Milliken et al., (2003: 1473) emphasised how important it is to kill the cancer of silence in organizations: ‘Managers must convince organizational members that they truly want to hear about problems or issues as employees experience them.’

With particular emphasis on the undesirability of severely hierarchical organizations that intensify the silence syndrome, she maintained that ‘organizational leaders must fight against the tendencies for hierarchies to impede

the upward transfer of information about problems' and view 'employee silence from the perspective of the employee.' (Milliken et al., 2003: 1473). Furthermore, managers are influenced by general trends. Thus, if there is a general ethos in society of managers being expected to 'take the lead' and 'make the tough decisions', the individual manager is less likely to take cognisance of what employees think or say (Morrison, 2002).

2.2.6 Introducing Kassing (2001) and the Organisational Dissent Scale

Silence is thus part of the landscape of upward communication in an organisational setting. Another facet of upward communication is employee voice, often expressed as upward dissent. Employees are more likely to choose upward dissent when they are comfortable articulating their circumstances (Kassing and Avtgis, 1999), and when they believe that they have a decent relationship with their supervisor (Kassing, 2000a).

A particularly significant facet of research on upward communication, on recent cases of management misbehaviour (Enron, Hewlett-Packard) has examined circumstances that contribute to employee voice, silence, and dissent (Infante and Gorden, 1987; Kassing, 1997, 1998; Seeger and Ulmer, 2003; Van Dyne, Ang, and Botero, 2003, Tourish and Vatcha, 2005). Early work in employee dissent focused primarily on whistle-blowing (Near and Jensen, 1983; Stewart, 1980), which involves the expression of dissent to the media. Later research emphasized dissent in response to issues of principle (Graham, 1986; Westin, 1986), personal-advantage dissent (Hegstrom, 1995, 1999) and more mundane, daily means of expressing dissent such as boat-rocking (Sprague and Ruud, 1986).

Kassing's (1998) research in organisational dissent developed a unique instrument; a measure for operationalizing how employees express their contradictory opinions about organisational phenomena. He argued that researchers had failed to consider the entire range of behaviours constituting employee dissent and although specific instruments to measure voice existed, (Gorden and Mermer, 1989; Gorden, 1988; Saunders et al., 1992; Farrell, 1983; Cannings, 1992) their efforts to 'operationalize' voice lacked consistency and validity.

Kassing (1998) proposed that dissent could be expressed as articulated, antagonistic or displaced. Articulated dissent was viewed as constructive and it involved expressing dissent to management. Antagonistic dissent occurred when the employee knows s/he will be perceived as 'adversarial' and was expressed when the employee believed s/he has a safeguard against retaliation, 'Displaced dissent entails disagreeing without confronting or challenging' (Kassing, 1998: 192).

It is perhaps the very dynamics of silence of Milliken's (2003) study that relate to what Kassing (1998) calls 'latent' dissent. Kassing (2000: 184) who explores the dynamics of dissent in an organizational setting defined dissent as:

'a unique subset of employee voice that entails the expression of disagreement or contrary opinions in the workplace... Voice refers to a larger set of employee communication behaviours that encompasses dissent but also includes communicating agreement, offering suggestions, engaging in argument and, providing support.'

An important issue, which both Milliken and Morrison (2003) and Kassing (1998) laid emphasis on, is that of trust or psychological safety and what makes another person 'safe.' Furthermore, communication in high quality relationships entailed more decision- making involvement and mutual persuasion (Fairhurst and Chandler, 1989). As Kassing (1998) has also argued, 'Particularly when contemplating dissent, employees consider whether it will result in retaliation or whether it will be perceived as constructive' (Kassing, 2001: 192). The issue of trust in upward communication will be discussed in detail later in the literature review. Jablin (1987: 679) argued that 'employees scrutinize and learn about the organizational norms governing dissent through socialization practices.' The risk involved to the 'image' of the employee would seem to be an important issue in deciding to speak up (Ashford et al., 1988). Milliken echoed the earlier research of Morrison and Milliken's (2000) when she spoke of the 'collective and social dynamics that might shape the employee's views about speaking up' (Milliken et al., 2003: 1473). In his recent work on identifying employee dissent strategies, Kassing (2001: 448) came to the conclusion that employees 'exercise a degree of political, relational and organizational savvy in expressing upward dissent.' As such, it is not just the organizational setting that counts; dissent is influenced by individual and relational factors (Kassing 1998).

Kassing (1998: 221) made a pertinent point: 'Dissent contains valuable corrective feedback necessary for organizational success.' When employees choose not to share their feedback within organizations, organizations suffer by forfeiting potentially valuable information (Hirschman, 1970). Conversely, when organizations choose to dissuade employees from expressing dissent, employees

suffer by relinquishing basic human desires and tendencies (Redding, 1973; 1985). Kassing's ODS (1998: 185) was an extremely effective 'functional tool' to explore these possibilities and 'draws attention to the pertinent topic of employee dissent.'

Kassing's (2007) most recent work on employee dissent deals with circumvention, a particularly menacing form of upward communication, as it involves going around the employee's immediate supervisor to express dissent:

'Circumvention entails expressing one's dissent to someone higher in the chain of command than one's immediate supervisor ... as a form of leverage for obtaining responsiveness and action from one's supervisor' (Kassing, 2007, in press).

Therefore, the motives for circumventing one's supervisor often point to inadequacies in supervisors' performance or capability, complicating the situation by introducing degrees of face threat. In as much as this is so, circumvention resembles political upward influence, whereby subordinates camouflage both, the attempt at influence and the desired outcome, from their supervisor (Krone, 1992).

Often enough, circumvention can be resolved by compromise, when employees and supervisors addressed the issues concerned and re-discovered a level of professional respect. Occasionally circumvention may lead to relational development between supervisors and subordinates. However, in some cases, a neutral situation may occur where the adversarial superior-subordinate relationship does not change.

It is relevant to look closer at organisational contexts that foster employee silence. Milliken and Morrison's (2000) model proposed that silence will be more pervasive in organisations that are more centralised and in organisations where there is a high level of demographic dissimilarity between managers and their subordinates. According to Morrison and Milliken's (2000) model of organisational silence, employees form shared beliefs about the danger and/or futility of speaking up through process of information sharing, social contagion and collective sense-making. These mind maps are constructed through the observation of and communication with others, as employees form beliefs and concepts about the dangers of speaking up at all, as the collective dynamics of silence take root. Over the last decade, the social identity approach to self-definition and social behaviour has increasingly been applied to understand the group processes relevant to organisational behaviour (Dutton and Dukerich 1991; Dutton, Dukerich and Harquail, 1994; Haslam, van Knippenberg, Platow and Ellemers, 2003; van Knippenberg, 2003). Group members may be particularly influenced by the information that is seen to reflect group prototypical values, norms, attitudes and behaviours, 'including upward communication patterns' (van Knippenberg and Schippers, 2007: 55).

Furthermore, identification with a group elicits group-orientation motivation (van Knippenberg and Hogg, 2001). Through self-definition in collective terms, the collective interest is experienced as the collective self-interest (Morrison, 2000) and silence manifests itself as a collective phenomenon.

Scholars have highlighted the importance of multiple and divergent points of view for effective organizational decision making (Argyris and Schon, 1978; Deming, 1986; Dutton and Ashford, 1993; Glauser, 1984; Saunders, Sheppard, Knight, and Roth, 1992). Thus, it seems paradoxical that so many employees report feeling that they cannot communicate upward about issues and problems. It is also ironic that this seems to be occurring at a time when management theory focuses on empowerment and more open lines of communication (Lawler, 1992; Pfeffer, 1994; Spreitzer, 1995). Scholars have argued, however, that true empowerment is not a reality in most organizations (Foegen, 1999; Moskal, 1991).

2.2.7 Managers' Implicit Beliefs

Another important factor at the root of organizational silence is an implicit managerial mindset that employees are self-interested and untrustworthy. In recent works scholars (Ghoshal and Moran, 1996; Pfeffer, 1997) have emphasized that an economic paradigm currently dominates the thinking of many managers. This paradigm, reminiscent of what McGregor (1960) calls 'Theory X', says that individuals are self-interested and act in ways to maximize their individual utilities (Williamson, 1996). In this paradigm employees are also viewed as effort averse, and it is argued that they cannot be trusted to act in the best interests of the organization without some form of incentive or sanction (Ghoshal and Moran, 1996; McGregor, 1960; Pfeffer, 1997).

Morrison and Milliken (2002) argued that that the belief that management knows best about most issues of organizational importance is likely to create conditions conducive to organizational silence. This idea has been noted in several sources.

Morrison and Miliken (2002) further derided the popular managerialist mindset that unity, agreement, and consensus are signs of organizational health, whereas disagreement and dissent should be avoided. Burrell and Morgan (1979) describe this belief as part of the 'unitary view' of organizations, which stands in stark contrast to a 'pluralistic view,' in which dissent is regarded as normal and conflict as potentially healthy.

Further, Morrison and Milliken (2002) maintained that that these beliefs will be more likely when the top management team is dominated by individuals with economic or financial backgrounds than when the group is more functionally diverse or composed of individuals with backgrounds in general management because the beliefs about employees being self-interested and untrustworthy are rooted in economic models of human behaviour, they are more likely to be held by those whose training and job experience have been oriented toward engineering, economics or finance (Pfeffer, 1997).

Moreover, Morrison and Milliken (2002) claimed that the similarity or dissimilarity of the demographic profile (for instance, gender, race, ethnicity or age) of the top management team in comparison to that of lower-level employees might influence the prevalence of silence-creating beliefs. Research on diversity has shown that salient differences often create distrust and fear of the unknown

Demographic dissimilarity between top managers and employees is a factor that could increase the likelihood of management supporting beliefs that contribute to silence. This variable is also likely to contribute more directly to a climate of silence by affecting the perceptions and beliefs of lower-level employees. Research has shown that the common experience of being different from those in positions of power leads to some predictable reactions on the part of those at lower levels in the hierarchy (Ely, 1994). When a large number of employees see that people like themselves are underrepresented at the top, they may be more likely to conclude that the organization does not value the input of people like themselves; individuals are most comfortable and prefer to interact with those whom they perceive to be similar to themselves (Byrne, 1971; Ibarra, 1992). Individuals also prefer similar others as referents for validating their beliefs and perceptions (Festinger, 1952, 1954, 1957, 1959). This connects to a view in impression management (Goffman, 1959) which is discussed later on in the literature review, that people are naturally drawn to people who are like themselves.

Moreover, managerial beliefs contributing to organizational silence will be more common in organizations with a strategic focus on cost control. When there is

2.2.8 Different Industries, Different Voices

Moreover, managerial beliefs contributing to organizational silence will be more common in organizations operating in mature and stable industries. Morrison and Milliken (2000) also predicted that the belief structure contributing to organizational silence will be more likely to dominate management thought in more mature and stable industries than in newer and/or volatile industries (internet, new media, hotels). In order to survive, organizations in high-velocity environments, such as technology, computing, oil and gas production and exploration and information technology, need to be quick and adept at responding to changes in their environments (Eisenhardt, 1989; Lant, Milliken, and Batra, 1992). Thus, in volatile environmental contexts, organizations may be more inclined to value employee ideas, since these ideas may be seen as useful in the search for new strategies (Sprague and Ruud, 1988). Research was conducted by Thomas et al., (1992: 30) on a global programme of change BP Exploration initiated with 1400 employees, to 'alter the way their managers and staff work

2.2.9 Organizational Structures, Policies, and Practices

Morrison and Milliken (2000) further proposed that when the unspoken yet dominant ideology within an organization is that first employees are self-interested, second, that management knows best, and third, that disagreement is bad, then management will erect structures and policies that discourage upward information flow. This tendency will be reinforced by the managers' desire to avoid any threatening information or feedback. Two common structural features of organizations dominated by such beliefs will be high centralization of decision making and lack of formal upward feedback mechanisms. Quite contrary to this management ethos, Grint (2000: 420) has argued that the most successful leaders are often those with the least compliant followers, 'for when leaders err –and they always do – the leader with the compliant followers will fail.' Others have noted the same phenomenon (Finklestein, 2003).

The belief structure that Morrison and Milliken (2000) maintained dominates many organizations is also likely to be associated with a lack of mechanisms for soliciting employee feedback after decisions are made. Procedures such as systematic surveying will be unlikely, because there will be a tendency to believe that little of value will be learned from them and because negative upward feedback will be seen as a challenge to management's control. This dynamic may be a form of the threat-rigidity effect described by Staw, Sandelands, and Dutton (1981), whereby management tries to protect itself from a perceived threat by closing itself off from feedback.

When managers believe that employees are self-interested, opportunistic, and not well informed, and that agreement is preferable to disagreement, they also will tend to enact these beliefs in their day-to-day behaviour toward employees. For example, if employees were to express concerns about a proposed organizational change, management could be quick to assume that the employees were resisting the change because it was personally threatening to them or because they did not understand it (Kanter, 1984) and not because they were truly concerned that the change might be bad for the organization.

Thus, managerial practices contributing to silence may operate at multiple organizational levels. Although, only top management has the authority to impose the company-wide structures and policies that contribute to organizational silence (for instance, centralization), managers at all levels may exhibit the day-to-day practices that impede upward communication (such as negative responses to employee input, lack of feedback seeking). This means that employees will

2.2.10 Implications Of Silence For Organisations

Extensive research on group decision making has shown that decision quality in an organisation is enhanced when multiple perspectives and alternatives are considered (Shaw, 1981; Hargie et al., 2004). Further, it has been argued that innovation requires a context in which employees feel free to deviate to offer totally novel perspectives or ideas or to question current beliefs and practices (Nemeth, 1997). These research foci would suggest that organizational silence will retard the effectiveness of organizational decision making, which may also retard organizational change processes (Nemeth, 1985; Nemeth and Wachter, 1983; Shaw, 1981).

On the other hand, unlimited employee input is also often viewed as undesirable. Too much input creates a complaining/whining culture and might overload decision-making processes thus impeding timely and effective decision making (Glauser, 1984). What is important to note is that most organizations suffer from too little employee voice, particularly around problems or decisions that employees perceive to be unwise (Argyris, 1977; Ryan and Oestreich, 1991; Scott and Hart, 1979).

Another way in which organizational silence is likely to compromise effective organizational change and development is by blocking negative feedback and, hence, an organization's ability to detect and correct errors (Miller, 1972).

2.2.11 Trust and its Impact on Upward Communication

Trust, or its absence, has been recognised a key issue in determining the availability and efficacy of upward feedback (Creed and Miles, 2003). Without trust, such communication is limited. Moreover, the frequency and openness of inter-organisational communication is a vital precondition for the development of trust (Sydow, 1998); a construct which is increasingly acknowledged as a positive contributor to business effectiveness (Sako, 1998; O'Brien, 2001). Moreover, there is substantial evidence that trust in the superior and the perceived influence of the superior are factors that have a significant impact on upward communication (Robert and O'Reilly, 1974; Read, 1962, Blalack, 1986). Trust is therefore a vital element in the rhythm of upward feedback.

Notwithstanding that this is so, there is also a recognised theme in recent research that the absence of trust in the relationship of the supervisor and the subordinate is

an important factor that contributes to employee silence (Morrison and Milliken, 2000; Tschannen-Moran, 2000; Milliken et al., 2003, Robinson, 1996). In the new era of faster connections between people and groups, trust based on inferences about the motives, character and intentions of others is becoming more central to the ability of organisations to manage their internal communication dynamics efficiently and effectively and so ensure their growth (Tyler, 2003).

2.2.12 Definitions of Trust

Trust has been difficult to define because it is a complex concept (Fukuyama, 1995). It seems by now well established that trust is multifaceted and may have different bases and degrees depending on the context of the trust relationship. In individual terms, trust is conceived as the extent to which people are willing to rely upon others and make themselves vulnerable to others (Frost, Stimpson, and Maughan, 1978; Rotten 1967). From an organizational perspective, trust is often a collective judgment, during the process of upward communication from subordinates, that another group (the managers) will not act opportunistically, are honest in negotiations, and make an effort to behave in accordance with commitments (Bradach and Eccles, 1989; Cummings and Bromily, 1996). Vulnerability is a general aspect of trust that emerges among most definitions (Bigley and Pearce, 1998). A subordinate's level of comfort in the midst of vulnerability speaks to the accompanying level of trust and contributes to the ebb and flow of upward communication within the organisation. Mishra (1996) suggested that such comfort is based on a belief or confidence that the superior, is competent, open, and concerned. Honesty is yet another common feature of many

2.2.13 Cynicism

There is another behaviour that is worthy of examination, as a syndrome of upward communication, and this is cynicism (Sayre, 1948). As Naus et al., (2007: 864) explained,

‘The nature of the employment relationship is changing fundamentally. Sweeping trends like globalization, and privatization and the corresponding emphasis on competitive ‘lean and mean’ organisations with high levels of productivity, efficiency and control have a pervasive influence on the contemporary workplace and on employees’ work experience. Organisations and employees have to find ways to respond to the new realities in the workplace so that work continues to provide meaning and organisational success. One such sensemaking response is employee cynicism towards the employing organisation.’

Dean, Brandes, and Dharwadkar (1998) defined organizational cynicism as a belief that the organization lacks integrity, combined with negative affect toward the organization. Cynical employees believe ‘the best way to handle people is to tell them what they want to hear’, or ‘managers rarely reveal the real reasons behind decisions’, and ‘people are just out for themselves’ (Mirvis and Kanter, 1991: 48).

Mirvis and Kanter (1989, 1991) described cynical companies as those embodying self-serving values that buttress managers who engage in exploitative practices, and communicate in disingenuous fashion to their employees. More often than not, the aspects of working life that most often disillusion employees and thus promote cynicism are perceptions of an unfair organisational system, and feelings that management cannot be trusted or the company does not care. Consequently,

cynicism is lethal to open and honest communication between the subordinate and the superior.

Cynicism can be moderated, but it takes time (Wilson, 1989). Moreover, a continual manifestation of the intention to instigate a change in the climate of the organisation needs to be recorded in the consciousness of the employees, where they actually see or are aware of managers taking their communications seriously and making an effort to implement their ideas (Mirvis, 1991). It is vital for employees to believe their voices are heard and it is also important for them to perceive managers as people they can trust and so communicate with in an honest manner.

Cynicism, therefore, serves as a form of self defence, to cope with unpleasant thoughts and feelings of disappointment about actions taken by the organisation and its management (Naus et al., 2007: 689). Cartwright and Holmes (2006) describe the evolution of human relations as a work in a transition process. In their view, the 'traditional' deal stands for the workplace of 20 years ago as a place where employees offered loyalty, trust, and commitment in exchange for job security, training, promotion, and support from their employer. Over time, traditional deals have been substituted with 'new deals', whereby employees are expected to work longer hours, accept greater responsibility, be more flexible and to tolerate continual change and ambiguity. The authors concluded that organisations have expected more from their workforce and provided little in return. Naus et al., (2007: 684) maintained, from a social exchange perspective, employees may be expected to somehow seek a new balance in the relationship

with the employing organisation, by scaling down their contribution and becoming wary of reciprocation. In these circumstances, the flow of upward communication would be reluctant, slow and sluggish.

Hodson (2001: 3) has described worker dignity as ‘the ability to establish a sense of self worth and self respect and to appreciate the respect of others’ in adverse circumstances. Korman (1970, 1976), and Brockner (1986, 1988, 1992) posited that an employee’s self-esteem is central to the explanation of work performance. Furthermore, self-consistency theory (Korman, 1970, 1976, 2001) predicts various forms of self defense by employees, who are motivated to live up to their traits, competencies and key values, thereby seeking to maintain positive self – images (Leonard et al, 1999). Often, employee cynicism or organisational cynicism has been described as a self-defensive attitude (Abraham, 2000a, 2000b; Kanter and Mirvis, 1989; Reichers et al., 1990, 1997), one of the ‘alternative avenues to achieving dignity in the workplace’ (Hodson, 2001: 3). It would appear that cynicism protects and safeguards this dignity.

On the other hand, the use of ingratiation and impression management behaviours might be mildly self denigrating. They may influence the superior favourably, but they deduct a certain sense of worth from the employee, the actor.

Naus et al., (2004) have pointed out that cynicism is not the only way that employees respond to adverse organisational circumstances. He referred to Hirschman’s (1970) and Rusbult et al.’s (1988) EVLN typology:

- employees may leave the organisation [*exit*]

- express themselves passively or aggressively [*voice*],
- develop a connection with the organisation, an optimistic, neutral work situation, between exit and voice [*loyalty*]
- or finally, withdraw and passively allow their relationship with management to atrophy and stagnate [*neglect*]

Furthermore, Naus et al., (2004) added to it the element of cynicism to form an ‘EVLC’ model. Here, cynicism, as a means of coping with feelings of disenchantment, of having been let down by the organisation (Reichers et al., 1990, 1997), is added to the EVLN model as a three pronged form of self - defense and comprises:

- a belief that the organisation lacked integrity
- a negative affect towards the organisation
- disparaging and critical behaviour towards the organisation.

Fleming and Spicer (2003: 158) have pointed out the existence of a different kind of employee, one who does not remain silent and one who does not speak up – the cynical employee, ‘some workers resist through dis-identification, in particular cynicism.’ Fleming (2005) further suggested that cynicism is a mechanism by which employees disengage mentally from the strong cultural endorsements of the organisation and yet give the appearance of conforming to them. Managerialist literature looks upon cynicism as a defect that needs to be ‘corrected’, while a humanist approach constructs cynicism as a defence mechanism. Fleming and Spicer (2003: 158) maintained the ‘increasingly dominant perspective that suggests cynicism is a process through which employees dis-identify with cultural

prescriptions, yet often still perform them. Cynical employees believe that they are autonomous, but they still perform according to the corporate rituals nonetheless.' Fleming and Spicer (2003, 2007) called this the *ideology interpretation* - in dis-identifying with power, the employee nevertheless endorses and supports it at the same time. The cynical employee's manner and upward communication may be characterised by disengagement, silence, dissent, defiance and sarcastic humour.

Moreover, Naus et al., (2007) researched organisational cynicism, using the two situational variables of role conflict and autonomy and two individual personality variables, of assertiveness and rigidity. They found that cynicism was equally predicted by high role conflict, low autonomy, and low assertiveness, which may be connected to a low quality of upward communication. On the other hand, loyalty is predicted by low role conflict and high autonomy.

Mushroom management is a contemporary allusion to the employees of the organisation being treated like mushrooms by the management: kept in the dark, covered with dirt, and when they have grown too big, decapitated. Atwater (in press) has suggested that this can damage the flow of upward communication in the organisation. Moreover, by giving rise to negative employee attitudes, it inverts mushroom theory and can restrict organizational learning. Furthermore, a casualty of mushroom theory is employee commitment, or the extent to which the individual is psychologically attached to the organization. As Yukl (2006) noted, when such commitment is lacking, the employee is likely to resist future influence

processes on the part of management, which is probably why the communication strategies of the Managing Director of Organisation B are not very effective.

Waldman and Atwater (2001) suggested that cynicism is likely to develop when employees begin to feel like 'mushrooms', further contributing to a lack of trust and commitment. The outcome is chronic employee cynicism about, frustration with, and contempt for, management. This in turn impacts on the willingness of the employees to communicate with their leaders and managers (Dean, Brandes, and Dharwadkar 1998). Reichers, Wanous, and Austin (1990), Wanous, Reichers and Austin, (2000) and Atwater (in press), therefore, argued, that to minimize the formation of cynicism, management needs to share information, involve their employees in decision-making, and keep sudden and surprising changes, like downsizing, to a minimum.

Furthermore, when management is seen to employ mushroom theory, it is likely that employees will take cues from them and model such behaviour on their own - employees then invert mushroom theory, they keep management in the dark, feed them a lot of manure (or silence), and give up caring whether the organization is productive. On a similar note, Atwater (in press) argued that when there is a climate of information secrecy in an organization, employees will be likely to firstly, not disagree with superiors, secondly, not raise controversial topics for discussion, and thirdly, present only good or neutral information to their superiors.

The dilemma is complicated. Atwater (in press) has noted that a key reason for management not sharing information is that they do not have enough confidence in employees that they can handle the information constructively. Regrettably, such thinking can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. According to the Pygmalion effect, that supports the hypothesis that reality can be influenced by the expectations of others (Rosenthal and Jacobson, 1968/1992), employees perform better and communicate more openly with their superiors when their managers have high expectations for them and show confidence in them (Jussim and Harber, 2005, Eden, 1990, 1992, and in press).

Moreover, Berson, Nemanich, Waldman, Galvin, and Keller (2006) recently assessed literature linking leadership with organizational learning and suggested that for learning to be achieved by the organisation, people in leadership positions should recognize their limitations (lack of pertinent knowledge, lack of shop floor knowledge) and share the leadership of organizational learning with lower-level colleagues. For example, Vera and Crossan (2004: 228) have suggested that ‘top level executives who are available and who manage by walking around convey a clear message about the value of others’ opinions, [and that] these leaders help create an environment of information sharing.’ Vera and Crossan (2004: 229) further noted that such leaders ‘steadfastly explain their vision and keep members up to date with important information.’ What therefore happens then, is that the employees of the organisation start to feel appreciated and involved, and therefore begin to communicate freely and openly with their superiors. The process of the creation of trust begins and this in turn leads eventually to organisational learning and effectiveness.

2.3 ‘The Romance Of Leadership’, Distance and Dialectics

2.3.1 Introduction

As Milgram (1974: Harper’s Magazine online) said,

‘Obedience is a basic element in the structure of social life ... Some system of authority is a requirement of all communal living, and it is only the person dwelling in isolation who is not forced to respond ... to the commands of others.’

This is especially true in the arena of the organisation, where the hierarchy of the organisation reinforces power differentials between top management and the employees. However, dramatically opposite perspectives exist on whether it is the leader or the subordinate who initiates and controls the flow of upward communication within the organisation. Saunders et al., (1992) suggested that it is the leader who sets the tone; the willingness of the employee to voice concerns and suggestions to the leader depended on how approachable or responsive they perceive their leader to be. Edge and Williams (1994) argued that it is the boss who sets the tone for upward communication in the organisation. However, Shamir (2007) has argued that subordinates are often initiators of change, including upward communication initiatives, and not leaders. This section investigates the different perspectives modern research brings to the issue.

2.3.2 Does the Leader Set the Tone?

‘Critical perspectives suggest that leaders exercise considerable control through, for example, constructing corporate visions, shaping structures, influencing cultures, intensifying and monitoring work and by making key strategic and HR decisions’ (Collinson, 2006: 180). It has also suggested forms of control typically

produce resistance dissent and silence in the organisation (Hardy and Clegg, 1999). As Foucault argued, 'where there is power, there is resistance' (1979: 95).

Moreover, Calas and Smircich (1991) contended that leaders are inevitably successful in 'seducing' followers. Knights and Willmott (1992) and Clegg (1989) further argued that leaders' hierarchical power enables them to provide rewards, apply sanctions, and gain access to expertise and secure followers' consent. Gemmill and Oakley (1992) maintained that leadership induces massive learned helplessness resulting in people becoming cheerful robots. In his study of followers' fantasies about leaders, Gabriel (1997) takes it for granted that the latter retain a psychological grip on the former.

Reinforcing these perspectives, Harris (2005) argued that the subject-object dichotomy artificially divorces 'leaders' (as powerful subjects) from 'followers' (as passive objects). On a similar note, Edge and Williams (1994) built on the concept of how subordinates read the cues supervisors send out to determine how subordinates' perceptions of their supervisors' communicator style related to the use of upward influence tactics.

Situational leadership holds that 'effective leaders' deploy a mix of directive and supportive behaviours compatible with followers' 'developmental levels' (Hersey and Blanchard, 1996). This approach tends to reduce followers to static and objectified categories. Path-goal theory suggests that leaders must choose leadership styles best suited to followers' experience, needs and skills (House et al., 1991, House, 1971). It thereby treats leadership as 'a one way event – the

leader affects the subordinate' (Northhouse, 2004: 113). Labour process theorists point to management's economic power, particularly the capacity to hire and fire workers (Braverman, 1974).

Therefore, it could be the leader who sets the tone for the pulse of upward communication in the organisation.

2.3.3 The Follower as the Change-Agent

Giddens (1979, 1984, 1981), however, challenged the view that the leader sets the tone for upward communication within the organisation and emphasized an intrinsic relationship between agency and power within all social relations. Giddens's notion of the dialectic of control holds that, no matter how asymmetrical, power relations between the leader and the employee are always two-way, contingent and to some degree interdependent.

Green and Knippen (2003: 3) argued that 'getting along with management, like getting along with anyone else, requires communication. This means that employees who want to take control of their lives at work must take the initiative and focus on communicating upward.'

Moreover, Shamir (2007) has built on the concept of leadership as a collateral, dyadic relationship between the leader and his followers that contains directly active degrees of leadership and followership. Shamir (2007) has argued that subordinates are often initiators of change and not the leaders. His proposition was: 'If we view leadership as a social relationship, it follows that as in any other

relationship, both sides contribute to its formation, nature and consequences’ (Shamir, 2007: xix). This would suggest that employees have a latent but implicit power to initiate upward communication within the organisation.

‘The literature on leadership and change portrays leaders as change agents and the subordinates as either recipients or resisters of change...However, anyone who has worked in organisations knows that there are many instances where changes are suggested or initiated by followers and the leaders resist them... They may do so because the suggested change does not fit into their vision or plans, because they cannot or do not want to allocate required resources, or for psychological reasons such as inertia, convertiveness, or fear (Shamir, 2007: xxvii)

This significant observation of Shamir (2007) about upward communication from the employee being disregarded by the leader supports the dynamic enunciated by Morrison (2002) and Milliken et al., (2003) - employees venture suggestions, trying to initiate a new process of change, only to be turned down by the superior, a pernicious pattern that in time leads to employee silence. He theorised that one of the tasks of the leader is to support and encourage change initiatives that are communicated upwards to them by their managers and employees:

‘Therefore ... we need to reverse the lenses and, in addition to focusing on leaders as change agents and followers as recipients of change and focus on followers as change agents and leaders as supporters or resisters of change. This is important especially if we accept the view... that most significant changes in the organisation do not start at the top of the organisation...The role of leaders ... is not to initiate change and implement it from above, but rather to support, encourage, and nurture change efforts that often start by individual ... efforts in various parts of the organisation’ (Shamir, 2007: xxvii).

There exists considerable literature in organization studies indicating that employees often draw on strategic agencies to express disaffection in the workplace. An early study by Mechanic (1962) argued that despite having little formal authority, ‘lower participants’ in organizations can still exert considerable ‘informal power.’ Researchers have also drawn on Hirschman’s (1970) ideas to

argue that resistance enables subordinates to ‘voice’ dissent. Hirschman argued that in conditions of organizational decline individuals are likely either to resign (exit) or try to change (voice) products or processes they find objectionable. He suggested that voice is less likely where exit is possible and more likely where loyalty is present and when exit opportunities are limited. Morrison (2000) and Milliken (2003) have established that this leads to towers of silence within the organisation.

2.3.4 The Romance of Leadership Theory and Social Networks

Pastor and Mayo (2007) focused on how leadership is embedded in the social networks created by followers and existed in the social psychological bases underlying the romance of leadership theory (ROL) and Meindl’s (1985) social contagion model of charisma.

Romance of leadership theory (ROL) (Meindl, 1993, 1985; Meindl and Ehrlich, 1987; Meindl, Ehrlich and Dukerich, 1985) provided a theoretical framework to understanding leadership and the conduct of management from the perspectives of the employee and the follower. Meindl (1990) developed the notion of ROL theory while trying to highlight the active role of followers. This has significant implications on the way the followers (subordinates) relate to and communicate with their leaders.

According to Meindl et al., (1985), leadership is viewed as a purely psychological phenomenon; the romanticism of leadership is achieved by emphasizing its phenomenological significance to organisational actors. Leaders are important,

according to the ROL perspective, not only because of what they are or do, but because of what they represent in the minds of the subordinates. As Meindl (1993:97) has enunciated, it focuses on ‘the prominence of leadership concepts in the same way social actors address organisational problems.’

Meindl and his associates (Chen and Meindl, 1991; Meindl, 1993; Meindl, Pastor and Mayo, 2004; Meindl, Pastor and Mayo; 2004, Bligh and Meindl, 2004; Bligh, Kohles and Meindl, 2004) further developed the ROL notion with new insights grounded in the psychological tradition, focusing on followers’ perceptions and the idea of collective followership: ‘Followers are not just connected to their leader but they are connected to other followers’ (Bligh and Meindl, 2004: 1349). This connects to Milliken’s (2003) silence as a collective phenomenon. This idea also points towards a social contagion theory of leadership, where the followers’ perceptions of the leaders are embedded in their social networks. From this perspective, the ROL theory is relevant to the pulse of upward communication in an organisation and assumes a social information processing perspective (Pfeffer and Salancik, 1978).

This emphasis on the ROL’s social interaction amongst subordinates accentuated a social psychological tradition (Brogardus, 1929; Lewin and Lippit, 1938; Tannenbaum and Schmidt, 1958) and at the same time, incorporates the recent advances in organisation behaviour research in to the dynamics of upward communication. The social psychological view emphasised that, to understand behaviours, we need to understand the context and the situation in which the actors operate. Allport (1968) defined social psychology as the understanding of

people's thinking and behaviour as affected or influenced by the presence of others: in this thesis, it can be taken to mean, the upward influence tactics of the subordinates, as influenced by their perception of their leaders.

Organisations are complex systems in which there are multiple forces operating at the same time and people's cognitive capacities are limited. Research has suggested that employees construct their own realities in their minds, which are later used in their sense-making processes to understand organisational outcomes – and this, in turn, defines and directs their upward communication with their superiors. Complex organisational realities are remodelled in the minds of the followers/employees in terms of implicit theories of the organisation that function as sense-making devices. Moreover, subordinates romanticize the notion of leadership; it becomes a critical element in their way of thinking and so shapes the manner in which they communicate with their superiors.

Pastor and Mayo (2007: 98) continued this argument further, 'the ROL theory takes a social view because it suggests that followers construe their leaders from information that is available in their social environments ... thus, the key element in this social constructionist view of leadership in the organisation is the network of contacts that bring organisational actors together.' Therefore, if social networks play such an important part amongst followers, then social contagion between groups of followers is highly significant in follower behaviour.

This dynamic is evident in the story of how Hitler came to enjoy the power that he did. When he was young, his self-construct was modest. He reportedly informed a

close aide in 1922: 'I am nothing but a drummer and a rallier' (Kershaw, 2001: 167). Kershaw went on to argue that Hitler's party and most fanatical supporters increasingly developed an idolatrous image of the future Fuhrer, and that their dramatic displays of this conviction were eventually internalised and enacted by Hitler in return. What has been described as 'the Hitler Myth' (Kershaw, 1987) was therefore, at least in part, an interesting demonstration of leadership as a social construction on the part of followers.

Meindl (1993) therefore likened charismatic leadership and its add-on effects to 'catching a cold' (1990: 131). The core idea, relevant to the argument of this thesis, is that rather being dependant on the interactions between the leader and followers, followers' charismatic experiences are affected, to a greater extent, by the experiences of other followers. Thus, attributions of leadership are not solely grounded in the individual interactions between followers and leaders but are, to a greater degree, the result of followers' shared experiences and lateral peer interaction.

This explains why the silence of Morrison (2000) and Milliken (2003) was expressed as a composite behaviour; it is the silence of not just one employee, but of a whole group of employees so much so that becomes 'collective silence', an outcome of 'social contagion', often in reaction to their concept of the leadership of the organisation.

2.3.5 The Network Based Model and Social Contagion

Several authors have suggested that the use of network theory provides the necessary tools for clarifying some of the basic social influence processes (Ibarra and Andrews, 1993). A social network is a routine pattern of interpersonal contacts that can be identified as organisational members exchanging information, influence or power -this would include the networks of the senior management, middle management and operational staff.

Pastor and Mayo (2007) suggested that the nature of the network is essential because it defines the kind of relations and links amongst the structure. In addition, network researchers make a difference between instrumental and expressive networks (Krackhardt and Porter, 1985; Tichy, Tushman and Frombrun, 1987). Instrumental frameworks in the organisation are job related and directly associated with the prescribed objectives of the job. The expressive or friendship network is characterised by the exchange of personal information and the development of close friendship relationships. Friendship ties are based on trust whereas task related ties are instrumental relationships based on work roles. The pulse of upward communication tactics in both these networks is likely to be open and spontaneous in the expressive networks and probably be more formal and muted in the job related ones.

Pastor and Mayo (2007: 100) emphasised that although a good deal of influence in organisations travels through formal and job- related networks: 'the information spreading through the grapevine of trusting relationships may be more credible

and have a higher impact on individuals' attitudes' and employee upward communication.

2.3.6 The Distance of the Leader

Research has shed interesting light on the 'proximity' of the boss and the impact it has on the upward influence tactics used by the employees. Mayo (2007: 100) has maintained that 'proximity' in the network is the basic mechanism of social contagion. A long time ago, Bogardus (1927: 177) observed that leadership is essentially based on prestige and this can easily be 'punctured by intimacy.' This suggests that social distance is essential for leaders to retain the respect of their followers.

However, a number of questions have been raised about the different forms that leader -distance may take, about how 'leaders can be physically, hierarchically, socially and/or psychologically detached' (Collinson, 2005: 235) from 'followers' and how these different features of distance could shape communication and work place practices. A recurrent finding of this research has been the extent to which employees are especially sensitive to senior managers' 'distance' from those further down the organisation and whether this affects their behaviour and communication patterns. Employees' views radically differ to what the leaders hold of themselves. Collinson (2000, 2002, 2003, 2005) argued in a similar manner and discussed his study on a North Sea Oil Platform. While the leaders talked of the company's 'learning culture', workers experienced a 'blame culture.' This had significant repercussions on their willingness to communicate openly with their bosses.

Within organisational sociology, 'role distance' and 'distancing' are concepts of long-standing importance (Cohen and Taylor, 1992; Goffman, 1959, 1961, 1968) that continue to be influential (Fleming and Spicer, 2003). Underpinning these questions of distance in the workplace, are interrelated issues of time and space (Epstein and Kalleberg, 2004, Jones et al, 2002). Similarly in social theory, time-space *distanciantion* is an important concept for structuration theory (Giddens, 1981) as is acting at a distance for actor network theory (Law and Hassard, 1999).

Thus, barriers within the organisation involve problems of distance, complexity, and distortion. Both physical and social distance may impede the development of trust. Distortion inevitably results from both distance and complexity. As a point of interest, in a story building on Shamir's (1995) arguments on the differing extents of influence of leaders who were close or distant, Yagil (1998) found that the attributes of Israeli soldiers differed according to whether leaders were close or distant. Close leaders had the advantage and were seen as more realistic and approachable by nearby followers who typically valued leaders' proximity.' Similarly, Conger (1990) argued that followers' identification with charismatic leaders will be shaped by whether leader's behaviour is close or observable or based on the attributions of followers and distant. Thus, followers of distant leaders will have less information about leaders and will, they claim, be more prone to ... efforts such as impression management techniques' (Collinson, 2005: 238).

Although Meindl (1995: 331) assumed that a close and special relationship exists between leaders and followers, Collinson (2005: 241) has pointed out that, 'No analytical space is left open for the possibility that followers may construct alternative, more oppositional identities and work-place counter cultures that express scepticism about leaders and their distance from followers.'

Furthermore, Collinson (2005: 241) has suggested that:

'leader distance can fuel and accelerate employee distance in at least two ways ... First, it can generate and reinforce employee dissatisfaction as subordinates perceive leaders to be too detached and aloof from the realities of production and service. Followers may identify a disconnect between leaders' policy formulation and its implementation at local level. Second, this very distance may itself facilitate the creation of organisational 'back regions.'

Accordingly, the distance between leaders and led could translate into various forms of employee opposition which translates into what Kassing (2001) called 'dissent.'

Out of the numerous studies that examine leaders' power (Smirich and Morgan, 1982; Gemmill and Oakley, 1992; Knights and Willmot, 1992), only a very few suggested that leaders may exercise control by maintaining their distance from their followers (Goffman, 1959, 1961; Gabriel, 1997). Some leaders, in keeping with the surmise that distance can perpetuate power and power can perpetuate distance, prefer to maintain separate and detached. Collinson (2005: 245) pertinently posed the question, 'In their search to maintain an identity of being 'in control', might some leaders be very reluctant to facilitate employee voice?'

2.3.7 Conclusion

If organizations hope to reap the benefits of a trusting work environment, it is the leader's responsibility to initiate trusting relationships through trustworthy behaviour (Whitener, Brodt, Korsgaard, and Werner, 1998).

Employees will have greater confidence and not hesitate to communicate in an open manner when they feel they can predict the visible behaviour of their superior and when they perceive their superior to have integrity. Finally, research has shown that subordinates perceive greater trustworthiness on the part of leaders who share control, including participation in decision making and delegating control. Employees' trust is higher when they are satisfied with their level of participation in decisions and allowed to express themselves in a fair and equitable manner (Driscoll, 1978; Stohl and Cheney, 2001).

2.4 Ingratiation Theory and Impression Management

As Hargie et al., (2004: 81) have said, ‘A basic principle governing behaviour is that people tend to do things associated with positively valued outcomes for them.’ Within organisations, employees seek to create favourable impressions with their managers as part of the process of normal social interaction. Impression management is one of the most common manifestations of upward communication, of which ingratiation remains one of its most finely honed facets. This approach forms a medium for the subordinate to communicate constructively with the superordinate and make a positive impression on the more powerful members of the organisation, thus gaining the favour of his or her superiors, which may be used to secure further advantage.

Impression management is the goal-directed activity of controlling or regulating information in order to influence the impressions formed by an audience. When one appears in the presence of others, it is usually advisable and in one’s best interests, to convey a favourable impression, and thus try to influence and therefore possibly shape, the audience’s perceptions, through positive and constructive self-presentation (Goffman, 1959). What does this evoke? Research on impression formation within the mind of the audience has revealed a complex series of mental processes that are involved in construing the character of others and the meaning of their behaviour leading to the identification and categorization of behaviour. Through a process of integration, the various inferences that are drawn about the behaviour are combined into a coherent, organised impression (Hogg and Abrams, 2005).

Ingratiation tactics are somewhat dissimilar to impression management, although they both aspire to the same endeavour, securing favour and advantage. As Jones (1964: 24) emphasized, 'Ingratiation can ... take all of the forms by which interpersonal attraction may be solicited ...; we are largely concerned with communicative behaviours which reflect the communicator's view of himself, aspects of the surrounding environment, and his esteem of the target person'

'Ingratiation can be conceived of as a set of interpersonal influence tactics that function to enhance one's interpersonal attractiveness and ultimately gain favour with another individual' (Westphal and Stern, 2007: 270). Research in social psychology and organizational behaviour has described ingratiation as being made up of three specific behaviours: flattery or other-enhancing communications; acts of opinion conformity, defined as verbal statements or other behaviours that affirm or validate the opinion held by another person; and favour rendering (Ellis, West, Ryan, and DeShon, 2002; Gordon, 1996; Jones, 1964; Tedeschi and Melburg, 1984; Westphal and Stern, 2006; Kumar and Beyerlein, 1991; Vonk, 2002; Westphal, 1998).

Gordon (1996) demonstrated that other-enhancement tends to have a positive influence on interpersonal attraction. Other-enhancement can also lead to beneficial outcomes through the instrument of social exchange. By virtue of the norm of reciprocity, a person who is 'paid' a compliment will feel socially and psychologically compelled to return the favour even if it was unsolicited (Vonk, 2002).

Recent empirical research in organizational behaviour has presented conclusive evidence that these impression management and ingratiating behaviours can lead to a range of positive outcomes for the ingratiator, such as increases in salary/bonus, approval for prestigious positions and perquisites, and promotion (Gordon, 1996; Higgins, Judge, and Ferris, 2003; Ferris and Judge, 1991; Judge and Bretz, 1994; Liden and Mitchell, 1988; Orpen, 1996; Westphal, 1998; Westphal and Stern, 2006). 'In particular, ingratiation behaviour is believed to elicit positive affect and psychic indebtedness toward the ingratiator' (Westphal and Stern, 2007: 270). This, in turn, causes the influence target, in this case the superior, to favour the ingratiator, the subordinate (Jones, 1964; Vonk, 1998, 2002; Yukl and Tracey, 1992). Studies have shown that ingratiation behaviour toward individuals who control access to job opportunities can increase the likelihood of receiving prestigious positions (Judge and Bretz, 1994; Orpen, 1996). Furthermore, other-enhancement elicits liking through 'reciprocal attraction' (Stevens and Kristof, 1995: 589).

'One of the most widespread and basic norms of human culture are embodied in the norm of reciprocation' (Cialdini, 2001: 50): a person is expected to repay, in kind, what another person has given to him or her. Hargie et al., (2004: 377) referred to the norm of reciprocity thus: 'whereby if we receive something positive from another person we feel obligated to reciprocate by giving something positive back.' The norm of reciprocity, in the context of this study, would mean that when the subordinate does or gives something (in the case of ingratiation, a gift or a compliment) to his or her supervisor, during the normal course of communication, the supervisor is obligated to respond, in the future, by returning

this favour in some manner. This it can lead to unequal exchanges - a person (in this case the superior) will often agree to a request for a substantially larger favour than the one originally received, often out of awkwardness, embarrassment or a sense of obligation.

The subsequent sections of this study proceed to discuss the dynamics of upward communication through the prisms of ingratiation and impression management.

2.5 Impression Management

2.5.1 Introduction

Strategic interpersonal behavior to shape or influence impressions formed by an audience has a rich history. The great Greek philosopher, Plato (B.C. 348-347) spoke of the 'great stage of human life.' Shakespeare (1598-1599), wrought the famous saying, 'All the world is a stage, and all the men and women merely players.' In fact, as Hargie et al., (2004: 1) explained, 'The mere presence of another has been shown to be arousing and motivating and this in turn influences our behaviour – a process termed *compresence*. 'We behave differently in the company of another person from when alone. When we meet others, we are 'onstage', and so give a performance that differs from how we behave 'offstage.' Today, however, impression management has been labeled 'Spin Control' (Stengel, 2000: 220).

Impression management is the process through which people try to control the impressions other people form of them. It is usually synonymous with self-presentation and conformity, which are modes of presenting oneself in a

favourable manner. Impression management theory states that any individual or organization must establish and maintain impressions that are congruent with the perceptions they want to convey to their publics (Goffman, 1959). As Giacalone and Rosenfeld, (1991: 2) explained, ‘Goffman (1959) contended that even seemingly innocuous actions might be designed to show a person in a favourable manner. He claimed that people are performers, whose main task is to construct an identity.’ Research by U.S. social psychologists suggested that impression management is ‘a normal and vital component of organizational functioning’ (Giacalone and Rosenfeld 1991: 9) that is integral to ‘success in today’s organizations’ (Rosenfeld et al 1995: 185). Although these authors described conformist impression management strategies (such as ingratiation and self-promotion), in the utmost detail, they neglect to adequately examine these behaviours as derivatives of asymmetrical power relations, as has been done in this research.

Goffman (1959) presented impression management dramaturgically, explaining the motivations behind complex human performances within a social setting based on a play metaphor. His work is written from a symbolic inter-actionist perspective, emphasizing a qualitative analysis of the interactive nature of the communication process (Liden and Mitchell, 1988). The objective of the performance is to provide the audience with an impression consistent with the desired goals of the actor (Liden and Mitchell, 1988). Throughout an ever-growing number of disciplines, impression management is used to explain the motivations behind complex human performances. In this study, it is used as a lens to investigate upward communication between the subordinate and the superior in and organisational setting.

Impression management, therefore, refers to the process by which people attempt to control or manipulate the reactions of others to images of themselves or their ideas (Schlenker et al., 1980; Tedeschi and Reiss, 1981). It is concerned with the behaviours people direct towards others to create and maintain desired perceptions of themselves (Schneider et al., 1981). *See Appendix 13: Key Variables And Major Relationships In Impression Management.*

This figure depicts Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical perspective of social interaction that, from the perspective of this research, reflects directly on the different facets of upward communication between the subordinate and the supervisor within the arena of an organisation. He viewed people as 'actors', engaging in 'performances' in various 'settings' before 'audiences.' Furthermore, he asserted that the actor and the audience, in the case of this study, the subordinate and the superior, interact to develop a conception or definition of the situation which guides their behaviour. Within this framework, the characteristics and behaviour of the actor and audience combine with environmental clues to serve as stimuli. Moreover, 'These stimuli are selectively perceived and interpreted through each party's definition of the situation. While the actor and the audience undoubtedly define many parts of the situation differently, their definitions typically coincide in many respects' (Gardner and Martinko, 1988: 322). Personality plays a moderating role in this process. As Gardner and Martinko, (1988: 322) have pointed out, 'Specifically, personality traits such as self-monitoring ability, Machiavellianism, needs for social approval and social anxiety account for differences in the ways in which people interpret different sets of stimuli' The environment, the person and behaviour interact in a dynamic

fashion (Bandura, 1978; 1993; 1994; 1997), which also reflect the potential impact of actor and audience behaviour on the environment, characteristics and perspectives of each party.

The stimuli that shape the form impression management takes are:

1. ***The environmental settings***: in this study this would be the organisational culture that provides powerful indications and pointers for the tone of impression management (Wexler, 1983). Organisational strategies, policies, symbols, the manner of work being performed, and myths and stories serve to teach demonstrate and support the behaviour and attitudes considered appropriate. For example, the emphasis that IBM places on respect for the individual, implies that actions and opinions expressed in upward feedback that violate this core value will create an unfavourable impression and be interpreted in a negative manner (Hofstede, 1980).
2. ***Actor characteristics***: the relative attractiveness, status/power and ability of an actor play a major role in shaping the self-concept that in turn influences the actor's presentation to others (Schlenker, 1980). Attractive as opposed to unattractive individuals are typically more successful at projecting an image of confidence, sociability and warmth, increasing their chances of their feedback being receptively heard and acknowledged (Kleinke, 1975). Pfeffer (1981) suggests that status and power legitimize and increase the variety of positive attributes an individual can claim. Finally, there is evidence that subordinates possessing specialised as opposed to less specialised experience are more effective at influencing superiors (Benevise, 1977).

Impression management theory indicates that there is a considerable social learning theory perspective that emphasises the interactive relationship between the environment, person and behaviour (Bandura, 1977). The actor's (the subordinate's) definition of the situation, which is linked to their own self-awareness, is the primary causal variable influencing impression management behaviour. In the same way, the subordinate in the organisation will make an assessment of the existing situation, the susceptibility of the superior to upward influence tactics, how close or not he or she is to the supervisor and also whether or not the supervisor has the power to advance his or her interests. As Gardner and Martinko (1980: 327) have stressed, 'Particularly noteworthy is the salience of audience characteristics such as attractiveness, status, power and familiarity'

Causal attributions are significant. All members of the organisation routinely invoke attributional processes to explain events, behaviours and outcomes that help them in defining the social situation (Weary and Arkin, 1981). As Gardner and Martinko (1988) explained, employees who observe that ingratiating colleagues are repeatedly recognised and promoted may therefore conclude that ingratiation facilitates advancement and decide that communication with superiors therefore requires ingratiation. As Gioia and Manz (1989: 528) emphasised, cognitive scripts (for feedback and behaviour) can be learned vicariously by watching the behaviour of peers in the same group and involve 'a hypothesized cognitive structure that provides a guide to appropriate behaviour sequences in a given context.'

2.5.2 Frames

The concept of framing was introduced by Bateson (1952, 1969) and was further developed by Goffman (1974), who describes the significance of frames in interaction. Framing is a way to explain the background parties need to interpret the ongoing conversation (Fairhurst, 2007). Thus, framing is important since '[a]n audience's interpretation of and reaction to a person, event, or discourse can be shaped by the frame in which that information is viewed' (Benoit, 2001: 72). Expectations facilitate our comprehension and interpretation of objects and events. At the same time they influence our perception (Tannen 1993). When applied to the study presented here, this leads to the assumption that a manager who partakes in top management probably understands and interprets events and activities in the organization differently compared to subordinates at lower levels with different experiences and expectations. These individual, cognitive frames are then expressed in discourse and subject to collective construction. As Fairhurst and Sarr (1996: 3) have explained:

'To hold the frame of a subject is to choose one particular meaning (or set of meanings) over another. When we share our frames with others (the process of framing), we manage meaning because we assert that our interpretations should be taken as real over other possible interpretations.'

Where do rhetoric and personal reality diverge? Is there a convergence between self -presentation and individual reality? A characterisation of the same event or unit of upward communication may differ very widely; an individual's role in 'an understanding can provide him with a distinctive evaluative assessment of what sort of an instance of the type of particular understanding was' (Goffman, 1986: 9). For instance, there can be many different nuances and shades of self-awareness in upward communication. There are variations in how much people engage in upward communication when using impression management tactics. Sometimes,

they may be genuinely unaware that they are doing so. Then again, they may intend to do so; it may make the impression they intend it to, again it may not come across as effectively as intended. At other times, the subordinate may be unaware of how obvious the impression management really is. These are among the issues that this thesis seeks to explore.

2.5.3 A Trichotomous Classification of Influence Behaviours

Wayne and Ferris (1990) developed a trichotomous classification of influence behaviours used by the subordinate that are generally motivated by self-promotion:

- Superior-Focused tactics are directed at the supervisor and are used to increase the affect of the supervisor towards the subordinate.
- Self-focused tactics are intended to create the impression that the employee is a polite, nice person.
- Job- Focused tactics are oriented toward the job or project in question.

See Appendix 14: Self, Job and Supervisor Focused Impression Management Tactics.

Greenwald (1980) and Steele (1975) argued that people strive to affirm their self-concepts and may accomplish this goal through the use of impression management, attempting to control or manage the impressions that other people form so that those impressions are consistent with their desired self-images (Schlenker and Leary, 1982). This translates into an attempt to behave in such a way that will result in liking by a target, the supervisor. Jones and Wortman (1973: 4) noted that ‘people find it hard not to like those who think highly of

them.’ A supervisor who feels liked and admired by a subordinate will have positive feelings towards the subordinate and therefore more receptive to upward feedback from the subordinate. According to self-verification theory, people tend to be attracted to and to identify with those who confirm the perceptions they have of themselves (Swann, et al, 1981, 1990). It therefore follows that a subordinate’s use of superior focused impression management behaviours while communicating with the superior, will have a positive effect on his or her supervisor’s perceptions of similarity to the subordinate and therefore respond favourably towards the subordinate.

Self-focused self presentation theories describe panoply of behaviours, including false modesty, boasting and a host of non-verbal actions such as smiling, making eye-contact and touching (Ralston and Elsass, 1989; Schlenker, 1980; Tedeschi and Melburg, 1984; Tedeschi and Norman, 1985). Wayne and Liden (1995: 238) assessed self-focused self-presentation in terms of two strategies ‘self enhancement and exemplification, or acting as an exemplar.’ With these strategies, a subordinate attempts to convey the impression that s/he is a friendly, communicative, hard-working, model employee and thus be perceived favourably. An employee must be willing to assume risk when using self focused strategies (Liden and Mitchell, 1988) because the influence attempt can backfire if the superior interprets the self presentation as insincere (Wortman and Linsenheimer, 1977). A consistent finding in the social psychology and organisational literature is the constant strong association between perceived similarity and liking (Byrne, 1971; Cialdini, 2001; Lewicki, 1983; Swann, 1981). Research has found that unless extreme skill is utilised, a subordinate’s self focused impression

management behaviours will have a negative effect on the way he is regarded by the supervisor and he may be seen as insincere, tiresome and false.

Job focused enhancements and self-promoting actions are intended to make one appear more competent at one's job. The motivation here is self-promotion.

2.5.4 Three Schemes of Upward Influence

Bickle (2003) investigated the effects of ingratiation, impression management and rational persuasion in a cross sectional organisational study in which subordinates were asked to describe their influence strategies. This research supported the hypothesis 'that the more an actor uses rational persuasion and the longer the assessor has known the actor, the more positively the assessor will evaluate the actor's task performance' (Bickle, 2003: 648). Furthermore, 'the more an actor uses ingratiation and the longer the assessor has known the actor, the more positively the assessor will evaluate actor's compliance-gaining success (Bickle, 2003: 648). This would corroborate Morrison's (2000) finding that upward communication between the subordinate and the supervisor begins to ease into a smooth flow after a certain amount of time has passed, usually 18 months.

Based on the work of Kipnis and Schmidt (1985), Deluga (1991), Falbe and Yukl (1992), Thacker (1995), Thacker and Wayne (1995), Kipnis, (1976), Bickle (2003) classified three influence strategies; hard, soft, and rational. Pressure is an example of a hard influence strategy to influence others, including the superior, using demands and direct requests in a rigorous manner. Ingratiation is an example of a soft influence strategy in communication, trying to induce positive

feelings in the target. Finally the strategy of rational persuasion uses facts, data and logical arguments. It is a powerful management tool of looking competent and appearing competitive in the job (Jones and Pittmann, 1982). Kipnis and Schmidt (1988) found a correlation between rational persuasion by the subordinate and a positive rating of the employee by the boss. Wayne and Liden (1995) demonstrated that the more subordinates used rational persuasion in upward influence, the better did their bosses rate their performance.

Furthermore, Judge and Bretz (1994) argued that ingratiation (which leads to high affect) is effective in obtaining career success because such tactics have been found to increase liking on the part of the supervisor, who begins to look favourably towards the subordinate and any upward feedback that is received. Conversely, self-promotion (which leads to low affect) can be expected to lead to lower evaluations and mediocre career success because these tactics decrease or do not increase liking (Ferris et al., 1995). As Judge and Bretz (1994: 59) have said, 'In other words, apple-polishing seems to be a better means of getting ahead than blowing one's horn.' *See Appendix 15: Wayne and Liden's (1995) Impression Management Model.*

2.5.5 Tactics used in Upward Verbal Self Presentation

Researchers have focused on seven types of verbal self-presentations, which reveal the similarities between the concepts of ingratiation and impression management. These are: (Jones, 1964; Wood and Mitchell, 1981; Gardner and Martinko, 1988):

1. Self-Descriptions
2. Opinion Conformity
3. Accounts and story telling
4. Apologies
5. Acclaiming
6. Other-enhancement
7. Favours

See Appendix 16: Verbal Self-Presentational Behaviour Used In Upward Communication.

However, it is important to note a difference in emphasis between the manner in which self-presentation is portrayed by Goffman (1959) and by Jones (1990). Goffman (1959) projected self-presentation as a benign behaviour used to portray oneself in a advantageous or favourable light. Jones (1990: 174) maintained, 'The view that Goffman (1959) projects is that interactions are not fun and often dangerous – hazardous to our emotional health and threatening to our identities.' Jones (1990) emphasised that for Goffman, the presentation of self was not therefore strategic, or even tactical; he looked upon self-presentation and the behaviours that go with it as 'the maintenance of a delicate social fabric' (Jones, 1990: 174). However, Jones and Pittman (1982: 233) defined (strategic) self-presentation as 'those features of behaviour affected by power augmentation motives designed to elicit or shape others' attributions of the actor's dispositions.' For instance, this kind of self-presentation would include 'selective disclosures and omissions, or matters of emphasis and timing, rather than blatant deceit or dissimulation' (Jones, 1990: 175). In this sense, ingratiation is a self -

presentational strategy (Jones, 1990: 177). It ‘exploits the logic of social exchange while subverting it’ (Jones, 1990: 177).

Furthermore, Westphal (2007) maintained that in keeping with most contemporary perspectives on interpersonal influence, self-promotion or ‘self-presentation’ needs to be treated as a separate construct from ingratiation (Ellis et al., 2002; Godfrey, Jones and Lord, 1986; Jones and Pittman, 1982). Whereas ingratiation enhances interpersonal influence by engendering positive affect and feelings of indebtedness, self-promotion typically involves attempts to influence performance judgments (Godfrey et al., 1986; Stevens and Kristoff, 1995).

Moreover, research has established that firstly, indicators of ingratiation have a different construct than indicators of self-promotion (Harrison and Hochwarter, 1998; Stevens and Kristoff, 1995). Secondly, measures of ingratiation have weak effects on judgments of performance or competence, while measures of self-promotion have weak or negative effects on positive affect or liking (Gordon, 1996). Thirdly, self-promotion is less effective than other-enhancement, opinion conformity, or favour rendering in enhancing interpersonal influence (Godfrey et al., 1986). This is probably because it is less subtle and understated and much more transparent than ingratiation.

2.5.6 Referent Power and Self Presentation

Zajonc (1980, 1984) argued for the primacy of affect and suggests that it dominates interactions between people. In the relationship between supervisor and

subordinate in an organisation, empirical support has been found for Liden and Mitchell (1989) proposition that affect plays a critical role in the type of exchange that develops between supervisor and subordinate (Wayne and Ferris, 1990). This can cause a bias on the part of the superior when it comes to evaluating and reacting to subordinate feedback (Tourish, 2006).

French and Raven (1959) described being liked as 'referent power' that provides the person who is liked with considerable influence. Tedeschi and Melburg (1984: 45) noted that 'there are many potential gains for the liked person.' These would include better received communication, trust and larger fields of influence. It therefore follows that a supervisor's liking of subordinates will be positively related to the manner in which their feedback is regarded and is also related to the supervisor's ratings of the subordinate's performance.

Furthermore, a supervisor's perception of similarity to a subordinate will be positively related to the supervisor's ratings of the subordinate's performance. A supervisor, when comparing his or her self-schema with recalled information about a similar subordinate should rate that subordinate more positively than a dissimilar subordinate (Liden and Mitchell, 1988). This phenomenon has been known to have a direct effect on performance ratings (Turnley and Bolino, 2001).

2.5.7 Publicness

Research into impression management has suggested that a key factor influencing the saliency of public image concerns is publicness (Goffman, 1959, Schlenker, and. Leary 1981). The more public the behaviour, the more concerned the person

will be about how he or she appears to other people. Ashford and Northcroft's (1992) research provided indirect behaviour for the effect of publicness on the saliency of image concerns and impression management.

Another factor identified in the impression management literature is the subordinate's dependency on the supervisor, the target of his or her impression management tactics and the source of reciprocal feedback (Leary and Kowalski, 1990, Tedeschi and Melburg, 1984). The greater this dependency is, the greater the impression management will be. The work of Leary and Kowalski (1990) explained that support for this arises from the fact that people are much less concerned about how they appear to strangers (people with whom they lack interdependency and with whom they are likely to have future interaction) than they are about superiors and peers. Again, 'if an individual knows that he or she will be evaluated (by the boss) in the near future, how he or she appears to others will be particularly salient' (Morrison, 2001: 533).

Finally, dispositional factors can influence the degree to which subordinates are concerned about how they appear to others when delivering upward communication to solicit a positive return from the superior. Two factors that impression management literature identifies are self monitoring behaviour and public self-consciousness (Fenigstein et al., 1979). Self-monitoring behaviour refers to the extent to which individuals are concerned about projecting a situationally appropriate public image. Public self-consciousness refers to a person's awareness of having an audience; it has been posited to heighten an

individual's concern with impressions held by others (Ferris et al, 1990; Leary and Kowalski, 1990).

2.5.8 Causal Attributions and Cognitive Perception

Impression management, used by employees, is calculated to have a favourable impact on the supervisors' cognitive processes and perceptions. It serves to 'shape other's attributions of the actor's dispositions' (Jones and Pittman, 1982: 233), which in turn, makes the audience (the supervisor) more receptive to upward communication from the actor (the employee). Of the many forms of impression management, researchers have found that subordinates frequently use ingratiation in their attempts to make a positive impression on their supervisors and to receive desirable rewards in the future (Jones, Gergen and Jones, 1963; Kipnis, Schmidt and Wilkinson, 1980; Tedeschi and Melburg, 1984). In fact, ingratiation tactics increased and enhanced the supervisor's liking for or affect towards the ingratiation (Samuel and Dollinger, 1989), to the extent that the supervisor's perception of the subordinate are shaped by the affect induced by ingratiation as much as by objective levels of subordinate performance.

This is specially so because of importance of the factors involving 'recall.' Because ingratiation impacts on the way a supervisor categorizes the employee, the supervisor may recall positive attributes and ignore contradictory information. Therefore, this recalled behaviour may be biased towards a constructive receipt of the subordinate's upward feedback.

Furthermore, Wayne and Liden (1995) argued that the subordinate's impression management and ingratiation techniques influence the superior's likes as well as the supervisor's perceptions of similarity to the subordinates. Their research, which corresponds with the findings of Morrison (2002), concentrated on two of the main types of impression management; self-presentation and other-enhancement. Self-presentations strategies, intended by a subordinate to make himself or herself more appealing to the target (Jones, 1964), may be accompanied either verbally or with nonverbal cues such as smiling or eye-contact (Ekman and Friesen, 1969). Other enhancement refers to the evaluation or agreement with the target person.

Cognitive information processing approaches provide a theoretical framework for explaining how supervisors translate their perceptions of subordinate impression management into initial impressions, encode them into memory and later retrieve and decode them when rating the subordinates' performance (Lord et al, 2004;). This process involves the translation of perceived social information into existing schema or categories in one's memory. Retrieval of this encoded information occurs at a later time when information is accessed from memory and used in forming conclusions, in appraisals and in reaction to upward feedback. Successful subordinate impression management behaviours favourably alter supervisor attributions of a subordinate (Jones and Wortman, 1973). Attributions in turn provide the information the supervisor uses in categorizing or re-categorizing the subordinate. Subordinate impression management has the most salient influence on supervisors when the relationship between them is developing

(Wayne and Liden, 1995). A controlled categorisation process is triggered and the initial categorisation of the subordinate occurs (Liden and Mitchell, 1988).

This controlled processing involves making attributions for the new subordinates' behaviour (DeCremer, 2001); the supervisors become vulnerable to subordinate impression management strategies designed to manipulate their attributions (Jones and Wortman, 1973). This may compare favourably with the supervisor's prototype of ideal subordinate behaviour. A match between prototype and processed information based on the subordinates' impression management may positively influence task assignments and the supervisor's receptiveness to upward feedback.

2.5.9 The Actor and the Audience

The history of the relationship between the actor (subordinate) and the audience (superior) shapes the role and performance expectations of each party (Goffmann, 1959). Moreover, because people tend to perceive themselves in ways that they expect others to view as appropriate, self-presentations that are repeatedly reinforced become internalised over time (Weary and Arkin, 1981). Both the self concept and perceptions of audience expectations define the subordinate's choice of feedback strategies and tactics. The studies of Gilmore and Ferris (1989), Jones (1964), Liden and Mitchell (1988) and Ralston (1985) maintained that empirical research has established that people engage in impression management in order to be liked and attractive. Schneider and Reicher (1983) believed that ultimately, the desire to be viewed as congenial and likable is the emotive underlying the actor's performance. In this study, it is the desire of the subordinate to be regarded in a

positive fashion by the superior that instigates the use of impression management while communicating upwards with him.

Ingratiation

*You're the top! You're Mahatma Gandhi,
You're the top! You're Napoleon Brandy ...
You're a rose! You're Inferno's Dante,
You're the nose, on the great Durante...
I'm so in the way, as the French would say, 'de trop'...
But if, Baby, I'm the bottom; you're the top!*

*You're the top! You're the Colosseum,
You're the top! You're the Louvre Museum,
You're a melody from a symphony by Strauss...
You're a Chanel bonnet, a Shakespeare's sonnet,
You're Mickey Mouse!*

*You're the Nile, you're the Tower of Pisa,
You're the smile, on the Mona Lisa,
I'm a worthless cheque, a total wreck, a flop ~
But if, Baby, I'm the bottom, you're the top!*

Cole Porter, 'You're the Top' (1934)

2.6.1 Introduction

Jones (1964: 11) has defined ingratiation as:

'a class of strategic behaviours illicitly designed to influence a particular other person concerning the attractiveness of one's personal qualities ... Ingratiating behaviours are illicit because they are directed toward objectives not contained in the implicit contract which underlies social interaction.'

Wortman and Linsenmeier (1977) have portrayed ingratiation as a collection of behaviours employed by people to make themselves more attractive to others. Ingratiation is a tool of advancement; at its core it is couched in tactics that advance self interest while, at the same time, hiding this intent.

Ingratiation has been further described as:

‘an illicit attempt to win favour, ... the decision to indulge in strategic conformity, other enhancement or artful self-presentation, is then, a decision hedged by ethical constraints. ... The individual may be aware that he is making a special effort to be liked ... but he may quite strenuously deny the immorality or illegitimacy of being false’ (Jones, 1964:105).

Many generations of scholars have grappled with the ethics of dissimulation and flattery, the features of ingratiation theory. At the turn of the first century, Plutarch (circa 100 A.D.) wrote in an essay, ‘How to know a Flatterer from a Friend’, which reveals convincing insights into the tactics of flattery,

‘I have no use of a friend that shifts about just as I do and nods assent just as I do (for my shadow better performs that function) but I want one that tells the truth as I do, and decides for himself as I do.’

Milton (1645) went on to call flattery ‘the only evil that walks invisible’ and Shakespeare (1600: *As You Like It*, 1:174) said, ‘Most friend ship is feigning...’

Lord Chesterfield’s ‘Letters’ (1774) said that flattery was justified by the vanity, and therefore the gullibility, of the target person. He advised:

‘A man of the world knows the force of flattery; but then he knows how, when, and where to give it;
He proportions his dose to the constitution of the patient.
He flatters by application, by inference, by comparison, by hint, and seldom directly...
Let nobody discover that you do know your own value,
Let them quietly enjoy their errors in taste ...
Keep your own temper and artfully warm other people’s...
Made him believe that the world was made for him
Make every man I met with, like me, and every woman, love me
Man or woman cannot resist an engaging exterior...’ (1750).

In keeping with a similar sentiment, Stengel (2000: 20) explained:

‘In the modern study of ingratiation, which is what the sociologists call flattery, the modern social scientist, Edward Jones explains the golden rule of ingratiation: “We influence others to give us things we want more than

they do, by giving them the things they want more than we do”....both parties have something to gain by cooperating with a lie...According to game theory, the flattery exchange (I flatter you and you say Thank You) is the opposite of a zero sum game (because no one loses) It is a transaction in which both parties come out ahead.’

Subordinates believe that ingratiation may help them form a good impression in the eyes of the boss. Therefore, it is often used by subordinates in an organisation to communicate with their superiors. Skilful ingratiation used by the subordinate can create a favourable impression with the superior and so help the subordinate in improving his or her position.

On the other hand, ‘subordinate assertiveness may lead to unfavourable impressions ... with the supervisor’ (Rao et al., 1995: 147). For example, the Enron scandal highlighted ‘a recurring communication dysfunction within the organizational structure of the corporation itself’ (Cohan, 2002: 276). It was widely known that anyone who queried accountancy practices was likely, at best, to be reassigned or lose a bonus (Cohan, 2002). A 1995 survey of employees found that many were uncomfortable about voicing their feelings and ‘telling it like it is at Enron’ (Swartz and Watkins, 2003: 76). Cruver (2003: 176) quoted a former senior’s manager’s summary of the internal culture: ‘There was an unwritten rule... a rule of ‘no bad news.’ If I came to them with bad news, it would only hurt my career.’ Tourish and Vatcha (2005) have therefore argued that difficulties with upward communication are among the causal contributory factors to Enron’s spectacular collapse.

Ingratiation has evolved through a cost benefit equation:

‘In fact in the cost benefit calculus, flattery is a no-brainer...It has very little cost...it’s not like you’ve done something illegal. People like it...There is no punishment for flattery....Flatter the King and you could be right there next to him. Flatter the boss, and you can wind up the number two – or even the boss herself’ (Stengel, 2000: 46).

It has also been demonstrated that ingratiation confers similar benefits in peer relationships – for example, Westphal and Stern (2007) found that board directors who exhibited ingratiating behaviours while communicating with their senior directors increased their prospects of being appointed to other boards. Thus, although this study specifically focuses on ingratiation from subordinates to their managers, there is evidence to suggest that it is a widespread characteristic of much human communication.

2.6.2 The Tactics of Ingratiation

Four common tactics have been identified in ingratiation: other enhancement, rendering favours, opinion conformity, self-presentation (Jones, 1964:34, Tedeschi and Melburg, 1984:137; Wortman and Linsenmeier, 1977).

Other enhancement involves expressing favourable opinions and evaluations of the target person by the ingratiating individual. In the case of this study, this would be from the subordinate to the superior. Jeremy Collier (1650 - 1726), the Jacobite English bishop and theologian wrote,

‘Flattery is an ensnaring quality, and leaves a very dangerous impression. It swells a man’s imagination, entertains his vanity, and drives him to a doting upon his own person.’

The effectiveness of such a tactic stems from the fact that when a person perceives that another is favourably disposed towards them, he or she tends to like the other

individual in return (Wortman and Linsenmeier, 1997). As Samuel Johnson (1750: 75) said, 'To be flattered is grateful, even when we know that our praises are not believed by those who pronounce them; for they prove, at least, our power, and show that our favour is valued....' The use of praise and approbation before or as part of the momentum of upward communication from the subordinate to his or her superior are all forms of other enhancement. As Stengel (2000: 15) has argued,

'Flattery is strategic praise; praise with a purpose. It can be inflated or exaggerated or it may be accurate and truthful, but it is praise that seeks some result, whether it be increased liking or an office with a window. It is the kind of manipulation of reality that uses the enhancement of another for our own self-advantage.'

The second tactic, rendering favours, is often combined with the tactic of other enhancement and is based on the concept that the target individual will feel a sense of obligation towards the ingratiating individual, as well as see the individual as a helpful, pleasant and friendly person. This sets the stage for a favourable reception of any upward communication from the ingratiating subordinate.

Other enhancement has been regarded as an offering or as a present; Samuel Johnson (1750: 155) wrote, 'Just praise is only a debt, but flattery is a present.' The recipient experiences a social obligation. As Mauss (1950: 250) emphasized in his classic anthropological study, 'The Gift', gift exchange has a paradoxical combination of voluntarism and obligation: 'Thus, giving a gift can be a calculated, self-interested, strategic act, designed to put the recipient in the position of returning at the time and in the form that is advantageous to the original donor. This strategic form of gift giving is the highest form of political

self-advancement for ambitious men. Gift giving is calculated to create a network of obligation that will guarantee social position for the giver. An implicit bargain is struck.’ This is in keeping with the advice of the old English satirist, Charles Churchill (1731 - 1764):

‘If you mean to profit, learn to flatter.’ Advice on doing this effectively was given by Jones (1990: 178) , ‘The best strategy for being liked almost invariably included showing interest in the other person and drawing the other person out, displaying such “approach” gestures as smiles and eye contact, indicating agreement with stated beliefs and options, and (to a somewhat smaller extent), flattery and compliments.’

The third and most common tactic of ingratiation is opinion conformity. This has been described by Jones (1964: 34) as a person expressing an opinion or behaving in a manner that is ‘consistent with the opinions, judgements, or behaviour of the target individual.’ It follows the proposition that persons like individuals whose values and beliefs appear to be similar to their own. The subordinate therefore attempts to conform outwardly to the style and beliefs of the superior, in speaking up or remaining silent, in the anticipation that his feedback to the superior might be well received. Cialdini (2001: 213) explained that very ‘few of us would be surprised to learn that, as a rule, we most prefer to say yes to the requests of people that we know and like.’

In as much as this is so, Jones (1964: 121) maintained that: ‘The general hypothesis is that low status individuals will use oblique and subtle tactic to ingratiate with high-status persons. Of the three tactics of ingratiation, conformity, other-enhancement and self-presentation, conformity may well be the most appropriate for the typical subordinate.’

Furthermore, research has suggested that opinion conformity exploits the similarity-attraction bias (Liden and Mitchell, 1988; Stevens and Kristof, 1995; Wayne and Kacmar, 1991). One of the most intriguing findings in research on social cognition is that people exhibit greater positive affect toward others who share their beliefs, values and attitudes (Byrne, 1971; Pulakos and Wexley, 1983; Wayne and Liden, 1995).

Moreover, displays of opinion conformity can be viewed as specific acts of other-enhancement (Westphal and Stern, 2006). In expressing agreement with another person, one essentially affirms or validates that person's judgment. Accordingly, opinion conformity does not only trigger a similarity-attraction bias, but also creates a psychological indebtedness towards the ingratiation who voiced the conforming opinion.

Furthermore, Oldham (1998: 20) emphasized the importance of developing tactics for survival and success within the political warfare of work organisations. He suggested that survival and success primarily depend on how well employees conform to the prevailing norms and values of the organisation (DuBrin, 1990; Jackall, 1988). Organisational research indicates that when new employees enter an organisation, they begin to conform to the values of the organisation. Employees who plan to remain with the company usually conform and demonstrate acceptance of how things are done (Van Maanen and Schein, 1979). This conformity is expressed in the manner in which they communicate with their superiors. Hewlin (2003: 633) has described this behaviour as 'cascades of

conformity.’ These are defined as ‘false representations created by the employees to appear as if they embrace organisational values’ (Hewlin, 2003: 634).

The theory of ingratiation as delineated by Jones (1964), involves three independent variables: incentive value, subjective probability of success, and perceived legitimacy. Incentive value lies in getting a person to like one, which is equivalent to the degree of one’s dependence on the person. The subjective probability of success refers to ‘the likelihood that any strategic overture will be effective in securing the “likable” attribution’ (Jones, 1990: 179). However, Jones (1990: 180) emphasised that the goal directed behaviour is ‘a joint function of the value of the goal on the subjective probability of success in achieving it.’ The third factor, perceived legitimacy, involves a balance of the value placed by the ingratiator on sincerity and authenticity on one hand and interpersonal competence and manipulative triumph on the other.

2.6.3 Reciprocity

The success of the tactics of ingratiation is based on the notion of social reciprocity, the social obligation to repay the positive actions of others with similar actions. Ingratiation ‘involves giving positive strokes to a person with the expectation that he or she will feel obligated to return them in some form’ (Vecchio and Appelbaum, 1995: 324). As Hargie and Dickson (2004: 355) said, ‘Colloquially, this is known as, ‘You scratch my back and I’ll scratch yours.’’ In an organisation, superiors tend to use ingratiation tactics less than subordinates. Furthermore, ingratiation is used more as an upward influence process than a downward influence process. Therefore, it has been identified as a political

upward influence tactic (Appelbaum and Hughes, 1998, Kipnis and Schmidt, 1988).

Ingratiation is, therefore, not always a manipulative, devious process. Amusingly, Carnegie (1938) implied that a person will eventually come to believe in his or her insincere remarks and actions and therefore they will cease being insincere. Jones (1964) maintained that Dale Carnegie's work is both a reflection and a determinant of the ethical ambiguity which characterizes the variations in human relations in the professional world: the sources of these variations lie in individual personality differences, in values common to a particular subculture or reference group, and in situational factors which contribute to a sense of what is appropriate.

However, it has been noted that ingratiation is a particularly ambiguous behaviour; it can be cognitively inaccessible – a compliment can be a strategic ploy or sincere or simply an act of politeness (Stengel, 2000). In fact, Wortman and Linsenmeier (1977) proposed that ingratiatory behaviours may or may not be assertive in nature and furthermore, may or may not be premeditated. However, as Stengel (2000: 222) argued,

‘What makes ingratiation particularly murky is that we are deceptive about its goal and its content. Moreover, the ingratiator often conceals his ulterior motive from himself so that it is almost impossible for the scientific observer to distinguish between genuine admiration and false praise. We are taken in by our own performance. We do this to avoid what sociologists call dissonance arousal – that queasy feeling of being a hypocrite.’

Ingratiation is both initiated out of inbuilt personality and character traits and is also influenced by situational variables. Three individual factors have been

identified as giving rise to ingratiation behaviour (Ralston, 1985). These are: Machiavellianism, locus of control and work task uniqueness. Vecchio and Appelbaum (1995:87) argued that 'a person's personality is defined as the relatively enduring traits and dispositions that form a pattern distinguishing one person from all others.' Locus of control and Machiavellianism are both personality factors where task uniqueness is regarded as an ability developed by the individual, an 'achieved characteristic' (Ralston, 1985:480).

2.6.4 Locus of Control

Rotter (1942, 1966) proposed that the likelihood of a person engaging in a particular act of ingratiation is a function of:

- the person's expectancy that the act (deciding to engage in critical upward communication or not) will yield rewards and
- the personal value of those rewards to the individual.

In essence this analysis rests on the locus of control. Locus of control is the extent to which individuals believe that control over their lives lie within their own control or in environmental forces beyond their control. Vecchio and Appelbaum (1995) explained that a person who believes that he or she controls the situation has a high internal locus of control, whereas someone who feels that he or she is at the mercy of fate has a high external locus of control. It has been found that internally oriented individuals are less likely to respond to group pressures or deliberately persuasive communications. Furthermore, Ralston (1985) states that an individual with an internal locus of control is more likely to use ingratiation

tactics to influence people due to his or her belief that he/she has control over the success or failure of her actions.

This is relevant, as it relates to the locus of control of the superior in the organisation, who is at the receiving end of upward feedback and ingratiation tactics used together by the subordinate; the locus of control of the superior is likely to influence whether or not he or she might be swayed by the attempt at ingratiation. Supervisors with an internal locus of control are likely to be unimpressed and therefore unconvinced by the ingratiation attempt and conversely, supervisors with an external locus of control might be partial and predisposed to the subordinate's ingratiation. However, in contrast to these findings, the studies of Aiyree et al., (1993, 1996), Pandey (1981, 1982) and Pandey and Rastogi (1979) maintain that locus of control is an insignificant determinant of the use of ingratiation because individuals with people with an internal locus of control do not perceive ingratiation as being instrumental to their career success. According to this study, the only personality variable that had a significant positive relationship with ingratiation was the need for success and achievement (Aiyree et al., 1993, 1996).

2.6.5 Machiavellian Streaks

Ralston (1985:480) described Machiavellian type individuals as 'manipulative and having little care for the feelings or well-being of others.' Pandey and Rastogi (1979: 224) have, through their experiments, given support to the observation that individuals judged high in Machiavellianism used ingratiation tactics much more than often than those individuals judged as being low in Machiavellianism.

Machiavellian persons are generally more manipulative, more persuasive and much more convincing than less Machiavellian persons (Christie and Geis, 1970).

The Mach Scale of Christie and Geis (1970) focuses on several factors, the most important of which are:

- the use of manipulative personal interaction, which establishes a secure base for favourable communication: 'it is wise to flatter important people.'
- an unfavourable view of human nature. 'Anyone who trusts anyone is asking for trouble.' This sets the stage in a counterfeit manner for the transmission of upward communication.

Machiavellian personalities, like Machiavelli's Italian princes, appear as calculative, goal-directed with one paramount concern, how to maintain power for despite adverse circumstances (Gemmil and Heisler, 1972). Caldwell and O'Reilly (1982) maintained that employees with a high monitoring ability in self awareness are more adept at adjusting their behaviour to the situation, less consistent over time and more likely to engage in information manipulation when delivering upward feedback.

Christie's Mach Scale (1965) was developed initially by paraphrasing statements from Machiavelli's 'The Prince' (1515). Geis, Christie and Nelson, (1965) showed that high scorers applied themselves with greater zest and originality to the deception and manipulation of a peer or superior in a pseudo-experimental setting. Jones (1964) argued that low scorers were less capable than high scorers of dispelling their natural doubts about the legitimacy of a task, whereas a minimum justification was all that the high scorers needed to practice any form of ingratiation.

2.6.6 Self -Promotion

Ferris et al., (1995) have noted that early research in social psychology tended to confuse ingratiation with self-promotion, even though they are clearly distinct behaviours with potentially different consequences. Jones (1990: 186) insisted that ‘in certain contexts, they may be in conflict’: ingratiation tactics work to make the ingratiator endearing; ‘self-promotion claims can make the claimant less likable’ (Jones, 1990: 186). Although both may be used as upward influence tactics and as part of upward communication within the organisation, Judge and Bretz (1991) define self promotion as the act of bringing to light one’s personal accomplishments, characteristics or qualities in order to present oneself in the most favourable manner. This can take the place of two different ways, firstly as entitlements (verbal claims of responsibility for positive outcomes, which reflect in the manner in which the superior perceives the subordinate, which again reflect in the manner in which feedback from the subordinate will be received) or secondly, as enhancements (attempts to exaggerate or make more out of one’s accomplishments).

Self-promotion has been likened to the self-serving attributional bias, which refers to the tendency of individuals to attribute successful outcomes to themselves and unsuccessful outcomes to external factors, or even evaluate ambiguous information in a way that is beneficial to their interests (Carver et al., 1980). In self-promotion, employees can work actively at promoting the assessment of their qualifications, merit and performance. Cognitive processing models reveal that when the superior, as a social perceiver (Crocker and Wolfe, 2001) encodes

information about subordinates, he, she or they looks for explanations for behaviour, which becomes critical in how behavioural information is recalled and used. In this manner, self-promotion during upward communication influences liking in the same manner as ingratiation. This would suggest that this affect or liking is consistent with social psychological explanations of behaviour, as positive affect has been shown to increase benevolence, generosity and receptivity to subordinate feedback (Isen, 1984; Isen et al., 1987). On the other hand, Ferris et al., (1995) argued that self-promotion tactics lead to lower affect and liking, perhaps because most people tend to be revolted and sometimes threatened, by those who perpetually and actively promote their self-image. As Bruce Lee (1940-1973) said, 'Showing off is the fool's idea of glory.'

2.6.7 Situational Variables

Both personal characteristics and situational factors interact to form a contextual background for communication (Hargie, 2006). Thus, the environment of the organisation plays a key role in the degree to which ingratiation behaviours are used by subordinates, particularly in the delivery of upward communication within the organisation. Gardner and Martinko (1988), and Schlenker et al., (1981) emphasised that impression management and ingratiation strategies are fashioned and shaped by the organisational context in which they are enacted.

Ralston (1985:842) identified three situational variables within the organisation that determined and shaped ingratiation from subordinates to superiors:

- the decision making style of the unit
- the ambiguity of the work task

- the scarcity of resources

These contextual factors may include the opportunity for impression management in the organisation, the existence of rigid and formal procedures, task and role ambiguity and a scope for novelty in the organisation. Thus, 'The more formalised and routinised an organisation's work operations, the more subordinates will use ingratiation to obtain desired outcomes' (Rao et al., 1995). Furthermore, the more innovative and high-tech work operations are, the more subordinates will use assertiveness and reasoning as upward communication strategies and not ingratiation.

Appelbaum and Hughes (1998) identified the use of ingratiation in temporary situational factors, such as the boss asking his subordinate for his or her opinion on a person or situation. Employees high in self-monitoring skills may be extremely talented in identifying and using such circumstances to deliver positive feedback and so ingratiate their way into their boss's favour.

The second situational variable proposed by Ralston (1985:843) is the ambiguity for the work task. Uncertainty occurs for an employee in a work group when tasks are not properly and clearly identified by management. Under these circumstances, the employee is uncertain on what the supervisor's expectations are and whether or not his or her performance on the task will have the desired outcome. In this situation, the more ambiguous the task, the greater is the likelihood of the individual to use ingratiation behaviour in giving feedback and in any interaction with his superior (Parker et al., 1995).

Jones (1964:113) argued that:

‘incentive value, perceived legitimacy and subjective probability combine multiplicatively to produce a strong or weak tendency to ingratiate. Legitimacy plays a role as a threshold factor, providing a go or stop signal for the behaviour once the tendency to ingratiate reaches a certain strength. Thus a person may flatter or ingratiate even though he knows his behaviour is devious, once the importance and the likelihood of obtaining a benefit reach a certain combined value.’

The third situational factor leading to ingratiation behaviour is resource scarcity.

This occurs when the resources of one group/team are controlled by another team.

Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) and Vecchio and Applebaum (1995) have explained that as an organisation develops to keep abreast of the external environment and peripheral forces, their structural complexity and the creation of boundary spanning roles arises. Management still has control for the rewards the subordinates receive. Subordinates do not have a formal influence and power over their supervisors; therefore they need to use other influence tactics in order to ensure that they receive the rewards they feel they deserve. Thus, they tend to increase their use of ingratiation as they communicate with their superiors, to increase their chances to reap more organisational recognition and rewards. Interestingly, as has been seen before, Morrison and Milliken (2000) maintained that resource scarcity is also one of the reasons for employee silence.

2.6.8 Management Style and Ingratiation

Ralston (1985: 842) identified two basic supervisory leadership styles, autocratic and democratic. Autocratic managers tend to be very controlling and by the nature of their control suppress employees’ opportunities to expressive themselves creatively. Davis and Florquist (1960) conducted an experiment that showed that a dependant subordinate will agree more with a bad-tempered, difficult supervisor

than with a benign, benevolent and caring superior. The management style of the organisation, therefore, impacts on the upward influence tactics used by the subordinates.

Willmott (1993, 2003) endorsed the benefits of the postmodern, democratic (as contrasted to totalitarian) organization where, in principle, a diversity and multiplicity of value standpoints is celebrated. He argued that democratic practices invite and encourage each employee to discover, communicate, and debate their values. The need for the employee to practice the disingenuous manoeuvres of impression management while communicating with his or her supervisor is redundant. However, in an organisation with a strong autocratic culture, 'you either buy into their norms or you get out' (Peters and Waterman, 1982: 77). In this situation, impression management is reinforced, and becomes an endemic part of the organisation's culture.

Moreover, subordinates need to look for other tactics such as ingratiation through which they may express themselves to their superiors. Supervisors with a democratic profile of leadership are more likely to be sympathetic to the feedback of employees, which does not coerce them to adopt artificial upward influence strategies to be heard. Therefore, the autocratic style of leadership gives rise to and encourages ingratiation behaviours much more than a democratic style of management. However, Aryee et al, (1993) found no significant relationship between ingratiation behaviour and leadership style. Cheng (1983), on the other hand, found that employees who believe that the organisational climate is negative are even more likely to engage in ingratiation behaviour in interacting with their

superiors than employees who work in a positive climate. Linden and Mitchell (1988) were more specific and proposed that ingratiation behaviours are far greater in organisations with few established personnel policies and policies that do exist but are not well supervised and executed.

How does the target person, in this study, the superior in the organisation, respond to ingratiation? Jones (1964: 162) argued that,

‘While the precise nature of his reaction would be difficult to forecast, the average target of such potentially ingratiating gestures is likely to make some sign of gratitude or pleasure, often accompanied by an embarrassed disclaimer ... the motives of the potential ingratiator are rarely openly questioned. ... [The subordinate] usually receives immediate positive reinforcement for his ingratiating overtures...’

In a study on ingratiation, where ‘*o*’ was the target, the superior, and ‘*p*’, the subordinate, Jones (1964: 164) remarked: ‘Focusing on *o*’s cognitive and motivational state, we may see that his major problem is one of inferring *p*’s intentions. Because ingratiation attempts are sometimes blatant, we might expect *o* to have complex cognitions and ambivalent effects when he attempts to sort out his impression of *p*. On the positive side, *o* may recognize that by his ingratiating efforts, *p* acknowledges *o*’s importance and value to him. ... *p* appeals to *o*’s desire to believe the best about himself’ .

Furthermore, Jones (1964: 164) used ‘a blend of logic, intuition, and informal observation’ and identified roughly five clusters of ‘internal response’ from the supervisor, *o*, along the dimension of affect:

1. Cluster 1 involves the combination of affiliation, attraction, and generally the un-ambivalent disposition to benefit *p*, to be biased in his favour.
2. Cluster 2 involves primarily subjective feelings of restitution and recognition.
3. Cluster 3 may be described in terms of feelings of toleration and forbearance, feelings which are the minimally desired outcomes of one who flatters for defensive or self-protective reasons.
4. Cluster 4 is heavily weighted with feelings of embarrassment and annoyance. In this case, there is a marked dissonance between *o*'s private feelings and his public response to *p*. The ingratiation becomes embarrassments. As Bishop Fulton Sheen (1895-1979) remarked, 'Baloney is flattery so thick that it cannot be true; blarney is flattery so thin we like it.'
5. Cluster 5 involves feelings of disgust and a strong disposition towards reprisal. This happens when the ingratiation is not subtle and the ingratiation attempt is clumsy and awkward. The ingratiation misfires here and the unsuccessful ingratiation might become the target of a negative reaction.

2.6.9 A Reappraisal

As Stengel (2000: 239) has noted, 'Towards the end of his life, Jones came to the conclusion that the most ingratiating overtures are not really conscious or the result of deliberate strategies.' He came to believe that most ingratiation was a learned response to being dependant. As Stengel (2000: 239) explained, 'So

much of what we do consists of automatic or unthinking reactions that are the result of a lifetime of socialisation.’

Furthermore, it has been suggested the very idea of ingratiation is passé in the modern business context. The genre of today’s organisations is collegial rather than hierarchal (Stengel, 2000). With reference to the smaller innovative organisations and the matrix organisations, ‘The old chain of command is dying’ (Stengel, 2000: 239). Nevertheless,

‘the hierarchy remains the basic structure of most, if not all, large ongoing organisations. There organisational pyramids... have proved themselves quite capable of change... and demonstrated impressive adaptability... More importantly, though, hierarchies deliver real practical and psychological value. On a fundamental level, they.... fulfil out deep needs for order and security. And they get big jobs done’ (Leavitt, 2003: 7).

On the other hand, Leavitt (2003: 4) argued that organisational hierarchies are flawed and imperfect: ‘they inevitably foster authoritarianism and its destructive offspring: distrust dishonesty, territoriality, toadying and fear.’ Bartolome et al., (2000: 4) insisted that ‘power differentials can never completely be eliminated, even in the flattest organisation.’

Nonetheless, Luthans (2006) maintained that it is no longer acceptable to use the words subordinate or superior in the modern workplace and that the word ‘ingratiation’ is passé; the new vibe is ‘recognition.’ Nonetheless, whatever the terminology used, ingratiation is a natural social lubricant and remains an innate part of human communication within organisations.

A behaviour that is adaptive in natural selection is called *reciprocal altruism*, which simply means that one good turn deserves another (Trivers, 1971). This might also be seen the fundamental idea behind ingratiation; it is a kind of social exchange. A person exchanges praise for a good turn. 'It was Darwin who first suggested that the love of approbation and the desire for praise are grounded in instinct' (Stengel, 2000: 21).

Truth is a concept to which the natural law is ambivalent. As Stengel (2000: 20) said, 'In fact, according to evolutionary biologists, natural selection often favours deception ... It has been said that man is the only animal that tells lies, but according to the evolutionary biologist Trivers (1971), many species deceive each other as successful rival strategies....Deception is in our genes.'

2.7 Leader- Member Exchange Theory, Ingratiation Theory and Impression Management

In terms of impression management, the successful use of ingratiation or impression management by a subordinate while communicating to the superior, may lead a supervisor to form a positive impression of that subordinate and to attribute desirable qualities to him or her. These positive attributions and impressions may lead to a favourable categorization of the employee by the supervisor. This, in turn, could favourably influence the supervisor's immediate responses to the employee and so enhance the chances of the subordinate securing a reward or a disposition of positive affect.

Leader-member exchange (LMX) theory is based on a simple premise: 'leaders discriminate in their treatment of direct reports or 'members' in forming

relationships' (Fairhurst, 2007: 119). Leaders do not interact with subordinates because supervisors have limited time and resources uniformly (Graen and Scandura, 1985, 1987). The exchange between the superior-subordinate (dyad), a two-way relationship, is the unique basic premise and the unit of analysis of LMX.

In-group subordinates can be counted on by the supervisor to perform tasks, to volunteer for extra work, and to take on additional responsibilities. Supervisors exchange personal and positional resources (inside information, influence in decision making, task assignment, job latitude, support, and attention) in return for subordinates' performance on unstructured tasks (Graen and Scandura, 1975). In this situation, research showed that mutual trust, positive support, informal interdependencies, common bonds, open communication, a high degree of autonomy, and shared loyalty exist (Dansereau, Graen, and Haga, 1975; Dienesch and Liden, 1986; Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995).

In contrast, subordinates who perform solely in accordance with the employment contract are characterized as out-group with limited reciprocal trust and support, and few rewards from their supervisors (Deluga, 1998).

Because this is so, employees may therefore use ingratiation and impression management tactics to manipulate the pulse of the relationship with their superior and camouflage their authentic reactions and feelings from the supervisor. In doing so, they adopt synthetic behaviour techniques calculated to earn the

goodwill of the superior to ensure that their communiqués will be heard in a positive manner.

Moreover, Deluga and Perry (1991) found a positive correlation between subordinate performance and higher quality exchanges. Ingratiation may also influence exchange quality by biasing supervisor judgements of subordinate performance. Kipnis and Vanderveer (1971) found that a subordinate who engaged in ingratiation received highly positive performance ratings that were at a level similar to the performance ratings given to high performers. Wayne and Ferris (1990) hypothesized that subordinates' impression management tactics and performance affect supervisor- subordinate exchange quality by influencing the supervisors' bias towards their subordinates. Varma et al., (2006) authenticated a positive association between ingratiation and LMX quality. Therefore, the use of ingratiation, as an upward influence tactic would result in an affirmative and rewarding LMX. Wayne and Ferris (1995) developed a model to ascertain the potential determinants of exchange quality. Their research revealed firstly, that impression management has a positive effect on exchange quality through its influence on liking; secondly, that liking has a positive effect on exchange quality and thirdly, that performance ratings have a positive effect on exchange quality.

Because LMX is a social exchange theory, it operates on an information processing model for the actor that suggests a rational calculation of resources expended for resources received (Roloff, 1981). It remains the employee's choice to use ingratiation or not, when communicating with the supervisor. Linden and Mitchell (1988) propose a model in which the choice of ingratiation strategy

depends on the employee's perception of the risk involved with the strategy. The perceived risk is based on the following factors (Linden and Mitchell, 1988: 576), which are discussed in greater detail below:

1. The Cause of the Ingratiation Attempt: Tedeschi and Melburg (1984) differentiate between defensive ingratiation and aggressive ingratiation. In defensive ingratiation, usually used to screen poor performance, the ingratiator may try and evoke sympathy from his supervisor in order to make it difficult for the supervisor to reprimand him. On the other hand, assertive ingratiation attempts are used by the subordinate as a way of promoting himself or herself favourably and are directed at long term goals. They are proactive instead of being reactive. Lidden and Mitchell (1988) maintained that defensive ingratiation attempts involve greater risk than assertive attempts and are therefore used more cautiously.

2. The Perceived Cost Benefit Ratio: The next factor in Lidden and Mitchell model (1988: 578) is the 'perceived costs and benefits of the ingratiation attempt.' The costs of the ingratiation can be immense. They include the loss of trust and credibility from the supervisor and depend on the outlook of the supervisor. However, there are also many potential benefits from an ingratiation attempt, which includes the possibility of career advancement. As Thibaut and Kelly (1959: 142) argued, 'Common experience suggests that ingratiation attempts occur when the prospects for success (that is creating an attractive impression) outweigh the risks of failure.'

3. The Impression the Employee Forms of the Supervisor's Susceptibility to Ingratiation: The third factor in deciding whether to proceed or not in the ingratiation attempt is the potential ingratiator's assessment of the

situations and people involved and the perceived target's susceptibility to the ingratiation attempt.

4. The Analysis of Whether or not Situational Variables Warrant an Ingratiation Attempt: A fourth factor in the model is the determinant of situational factors (Liden and Mitchell, 1988) and has also been emphasized by Gardner and Martinko (1988a), Kumar (1989), Perreault and Miles (1978), Schlenker (1980) and Ralston (1985: 842). An individual will need to assess whether or not a given situation is conducive or not for engaging in ingratiation.

2.7.1 Performance Evaluations

Wortman and Linsenmeier (1977: 139) believed that a person could receive higher performance appraisals through the process of ingratiation as a positive career achiever. Kipnis and Vandaveer (1971: 238) conducted a study on the impact ingratiation can have on career success and compared three different classes of workers, first, average workers skilled in the art of ingratiation, second, average workers low in the use of ingratiation and third, high performers who did not use ingratiation. The study revealed that both the ingratiators and performers (the first and third categories) were given significantly higher performance evaluations than the average workers who did not indulge in ingratiation behaviours. These findings supported the belief that the employees who ingratiate can receive more of the rewards available than an equally competent ingratiator. 'In essence, the strategy has some merit' (Appelbaum and Hughes, 1998: 92). The reason given for this is that, as a political upward influence tactic, ingratiation influences success, through the social psychological process of 'affect', which is

manifested in the performance ratings subordinates receive from their superiors (Cardy and Dobson, 1986: 672).

Furthermore, Pandey (1981: 65) suggested that the favours the supervisor grants the ingratiating employee happen as a result of the ingratiator controlling the behaviour of the supervisor by means of reciprocity; the supervisor, in other words feel obliged to return the ingratiatory behaviour of the subordinate. Appelbaum and Hughes (1998: 92) have explained, 'This is a powerful technique to modify and control behaviour and consequences.'

2.7.2 Ingratiation and Career Success

Judge and Bretz (1994) conducted the first study of political influence behaviour as a measure of total career success. Success was defined as 'outcomes or achievements as a result of one's work experience' (Judge and Bretz, 1994: 54). The outcomes that made up career success consisted of both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. Extrinsic factors included pay, promotions and status. Intrinsic rewards were viewed as being equally if not more important and were defined by Judge and Bretz (1994: 47) as consisting of job and life satisfaction. The results of the study by Judge and Bretz (1994) provided the first direct support for the role of ingratiatory behaviour in predicting overall career success. The findings indicated that ingratiation predicted extrinsic career success. Furthermore, ingratiation was also significantly positive in predicting intrinsic career success.

However, these findings were contradicted by the results of Ayree et al., (1996) who demonstrated that ingratiation has no significant effect on intrinsic or

extrinsic career success. Appelbaum and Hughes (1998: 93), nonetheless, make the point that this study was conducted in the Far East and 'may not be easily replicated or generalised into the Western organisations due to different cultural variables.'

On the other hand, Thacker and Wayne (1995: 784) believed that although ingratiation was found to increase the chances of promotions, it also produced a negative correlation - there is always the possibility that the supervisor might attribute complimentary and confirming behaviours of ingratiation to ulterior motives or manipulative intentions. He or she might see through the devious character of the upward influence tactic, which may lead to a decrease in his or her 'liking' of the subordinate (Kipnis and Schmidt, 1988; Wortman and Linsenmeier, 1997). This would defeat the purpose of the ingratiation effort. Applebaum and Hughes (1998) and Martin (1992) suggested that another explanation might be that since such positive feelings are expressed from the subordinate to the supervisor, the supervisor may feel that there is no need to give the person a pay rise or promotion to retain his or her services.

However, a difficulty arises when inefficient workers happen to achieve greater organisation success through the process of ingratiation than workers who are evaluated as being highly productive. It is then that this tactic can be looked upon as being dysfunctional to an organisation. It may become dysfunctional when it is excessive and the organisational culture becomes one of sycophancy.

2.8 Organisational Power and Politics

2.8.1 Introduction

Business organisations are microcosms of the larger society, with myriad different forms of human interaction and communication. Social psychology is a visible force in research concerning business organisations. This study proceeds to investigate upward feedback within the organisation through the prisms of impression management (Goffman, 1959) and ingratiation theory (Jones, 1964). In doing so, insights emerge that bridge perceptions in social psychology and organisational behaviour. Thus, 'One of the important advantages here is the research stimulus value of relating a socially important topic like ingratiation to the more basic processes of motivation, perception andcommunication' (Jones, 1964: 201).

Maslow (1943) argued that human beings are perpetually wanting, needful creatures. His hierarchy of needs model is often depicted as a pyramid consisting of five levels: the four lower levels are grouped together as deficiency needs (physiological, safety, belonging, esteem) while the peak of the pyramid is labelled growth needs (self-actualisation), associated with psychological needs.

In keeping with this model, Alderfer's (1969) Existence/Relatedness/Growth (ERG) Theory of Needs (Alderfer, 1969) argued that there are three groups of needs: firstly, existence needs that relate to basic material requirements (a job or a

salary, a house), and secondly, relationship needs, which are based upon the desire to have sound interpersonal relationships in their personal and professional lives, and finally, the need for personal development.

Within the corporate realm, people's work goals include a melange of these needs, and usually revolve around self-interest. As Baumeister (1989:57) said:

'In work organisations, such goals include protecting one's job, maintaining and increasing one's salary, and advancing one's career. Increasingly, these goals depend on how the individual is perceived by other members of the organisation. Thus, for individuals to pursue their goals in an organisational context, it becomes vitally important to communicate certain information (or misinformation) about themselves to others. Thus, self-presentation, or impression management, is of central importance.'

Ingratiation and impression management are, therefore, of central importance in the pulse of upward communication from the subordinate to the superior. Evidence for the importance of self-presentation behaviours in organisations was provided by Kahn, (1990) and Gould and Penley (1984), who evaluated the degree to which employees used self presentation, communicating with superiors about one's achievements and goals, and nominating oneself as ready for new duties and challenges. Employees who used upward influence strategies while communicating with their superiors were 'less likely to be stuck at a 'plateau' (Baumeister, 1989: 58) than those who did not. This would suggest that an effective use of ingratiation and impression management strategies during upward communication is a vital ingredient to successful career success. 'Self presentational activities thus have taken a central role in defining life's meaning for many individuals. People in organisations are not simply doing what they

think others want them to do. They are constructing their own lives and identities’ (Baumeister, 1989: 59).

2.8.2 Power and Organisational Politics

‘The concept of power is inextricably woven into the fabric of ingratiation, since the tactical pursuit of approval must have some motivational bias in a desire for approval mediated resources’ (Jones, 1964: 118).

Organisational politics can be regarded as power in action, against a patina of influence strategies (Pfeffer, 1989). Politics has a negative connotation. Indeed, so does ingratiation, as ‘the illegitimate and seamy side of interpersonal communication’ (Jones 1964: 3). This would suggest that the actor is attempting to use measures that are not totally legitimate to achieve what Clegg (2000:1) called ‘the control of illegitimate moves in the legitimate organisation game.’

Furthermore, organisational politics involves intentional acts of influence to enhance or protect the self-interest of individuals or groups. ‘They can be helpful as well as harmful to the members of an organisation and the organisation itself’ (Kumar and Ghadially, 1989:306). Some dynamics of political behaviour in organisations may include forming networks or ‘manipulating the flow of vital information to obtain personal ends’ (Vecchio and Appelbaum, 1995: 323). It is not uncommon for members of an organisation to exhibit political behaviour: everyone is a player, subordinates as well as managers.

Clegg (2003: 537) maintained that 'in forms of organisation are forms of social relations. All social relations involve power relations. Power is evident in these relations as relations not only of ownership and control but also of structuration and design.' Similarly, Bourdieu (1983) was alert to the symbolic manifestations of power relations, looking at the way in which the dominant symbolic order of any arena, social or organisational, generates a system of highly visible distinctions and discriminations which stratify those populations subject to them. The relationship of the superior and the subordinate within the social system of the organisation comes immediately to mind when reflecting on this insight, by the very fact that they are in different power positions. It is these very power relations of autonomy and dominance that obstruct and subvert open upward communication from the subordinate to the superior (Morrison, 2000).

However, when ingratiation and impression management techniques are used by subordinates to communicate with their superordinate, they serve to neutralise, to a certain synthetic extent, the discrepancies of authority and the disparities of power.

Speaking of the 'Science of Ingratiation', Stengel (2000: 221) reiterated that ingratiation 'is a way of seeking to shift the power relationship between the ingratiator and his or her target.' Jones (1964) called it *illicit* and *illegitimate* because it exploited and to a certain extent violated Goffman's (1959) perception of social exchange, which was that in social situations people are sincere and need to help each other save face. In as much as this is so, 'The ingratiator sends out signals that he accepts the basic social contract, and then privately violates it'

(Stengel, 2000: 221). Thus, 'Truth is the golden standard; so flattery is alchemy' (Stengel, 2000: 28). As Chaucer (1387) insisted, 'Flaterie is general wrongful preysing.'

Furthermore, to a certain extent, ingratiation and impression management may, when they are used in the context of upward communication within the organisation, be thought of as political formulae. Ferris, Russ and Fandt (1989) and Frost (1987) described political influence behaviour as a social influence process where behaviour is designed to maximise a person's short-term or long-term interest, which concurs with, or is opposite to other people's interests. Mintzberg (1983) argued that the nature of political influence behaviour is typically illegitimate, unsanctioned and often in violation of social norms. On the other hand, Ferris et al., (1995) maintained that tactics such as ingratiation and self-promotion are unquestionably specific forms of political behaviour and a natural part of upward communication within the organisation.

2.8.3 Ingratiation and Power

Because there cannot be ingratiation without power differentials, the study of ingratiation involves a scrutiny of power, authority and control. Therefore,

'The study of ingratiation is closely connected with the study of power and power differentials... The very assumptions underlying our definition of ingratiation imply some kind of differential resources, for the motivational relevance of such behaviour depends on the fact that the target person 'o' has something the ingratiator 'p' wants – whether it is a meaningful nod of approval, a higher salary, a promotion in rank, or some cooperative action...' (Jones, 1964: 118).

The Thibaut and Kelly (1959) exchange of outcomes model suggested that ingratiation can be viewed as a set of strategies calculated to balance the unequal power differentials in the relationship between the supervisor and the subordinate:

‘The low status person may maintain his outcomes at an acceptable level by complying with the wishes or directives of the high-power person. In line with the values in the task-relevant matrix, which he has verified, the worker would be exchanging his labour or services for equitable rewards. However, if the worker without ‘talent’ might not be able to meet the supervisor’s standards, he may attempt to control the supervisor by illicit manoeuvres outside the task system itself, manoeuvres designed ultimately to increase the worker’s relative power by increasing his attractiveness as a person’ (Jones, 1964: 142).

Thus, it can be argued that power is not a simple, unidirectional construct, in which powerful individuals exercise influence over those without power. Rather, it is an inter-actional dynamic, in which a process of mutual influence is enacted through language, attitudes and ingratiating behaviours, and in which the contest for authority and rewards is an ever moving goal and an unyielding constant.

Furthermore, sensemaking perspectives are particularly appropriate when the dynamics of power are looked at within the fabric of critical upward communication. Power is a vital factor on both the surface and deeper structures of organization, while communication plays a pivotal role in how power relations are developed (Frost, 1987). However, power itself is a frequently unacknowledged variable in organizational science (Clegg, 2000). Indeed, ‘corporate organizations have remained largely autocratic in form’ (Deetz and Mumby, 1990: 19).

Clegg et al., (2006: 201) has suggested, ‘Power functions as an alternate medium of communication to trust through which dominant and subordinate groups can co-ordinate and control their social interaction.’ Furthermore, as Aldrich (1999:7)

said, 'The concentration of power in organisations contributes not only to the attainment of large scale goals, but also to some of the most troublesome actions... We might view the growth of organisational society as a record of people enslaved and dominated by organisations.' Clegg et al., (2006: 8) qualified this insight thus, 'In organisation theory, freedom is defined through posing the existential and environmental conditions under which rational action is possible. These conditions limit freedom by imposing an ethic of calculation upon a freedom to act.'

2.8.4 Dominance in the Organisation

Ashforth and Mael (1998: 147) argued that 'organisations can be characterised by systems of domination that seek to impose definitions of the organisational self and desirable conduct. These impositions may threaten existing self-conceptions and threaten ambivalence and a desire to resist.' They suggested that resistance is often a collective product, performed with and justified and legitimised by peers (an idea that has been reflected in the writings of Morrison (2000) and Milliken and Morrison (2003). In turn the resistance cycle outlines an 'iterative process of control-resistance-control, ultimately leading to a more or less stable state of mutual accommodation' (Ashforth and Mael, 1998: 147). Both the employee and the supervisor are frozen into this model. This research investigates how ingratiation and impression management used by employees during upward communication can deflect or redirect this cycle of 'control-resistance-control.'

Authority and power are closely related. Habermas (1987b: 271) has pointed out that the relation between two concepts implies a systematic lack of reciprocal

balance between them because ‘a person taking orders is structurally disadvantaged in relation to a power with the power to give them.’ Clegg et al., (2006: 195) emphasised that in an organisation, some members who are hierarchically superordinate are in a stronger position to impose power: ‘They determine the conditions under which legitimacy is defined and authority dispensed ... Those who are not in top management and therefore not hierarchically superordinate, cannot enter into the process of goal formation ... and thus can never offset their organisational structural disadvantage.’ This, naturally, has severe adverse effects on the flow of upward communication within the organisation.

Moreover, it has been argued that ‘authority is hierarchy’s inseparable handmaiden. Even the most modern of managers must eventually exercise some degree of authority some of the time’ (Leavitt, 2003: 7). As Bartoleme (1986: 7) explained, ‘The most ... pervasive negative effect of the hierarchical structure can be summarized in the saying, “Trust flees authority”. Good ideas often remain unexpressed because subordinates believe they will be punished for disagreeing with their superiors or showing too much competence.’ Kelley had (1951: 56) concluded, ‘that the existence of a hierarchy produces restraining forces against communicating criticisms of persons at the other level.’ For employees, ‘it is hard to blend ingrained egalitarian values with constant mindfulness of who the boss is. For leaders, it is just as hard to maintain their individual authenticity while working inside a hierarchy, no matter how modern and benevolent it might be’ (Leavitt, 2003: 7). It is from these very dynamics that the employee’s manifesto of managing impressions and seeking favour from the superior evolves. As

Martinko (1988a: 333) maintained, 'Ingratiation behaviour is positively related to the actor's perceptions of audience ... status and power.'

Furthermore, Habermas (1971) distinguished between cognitive and knowledge producing interests in the workplace. Deetz and Mumby (1992) argued that there are different types of rationality that can be used to form knowledge and guide decision making. Within the arena of organisational communication, these interests can be considered as communication guided by the attempt to reach understanding (Habermas, 1984). By focusing on the question of interests, power and authority become part of the 'structural quality of institutional life, which is reproduced in the day to day communicative practices of its members' (Giddens, 1979, 1981, 1984, 1989). Deetz and Mumby (1992) conclude that communication is more fundamentally constitutive of power rather than being casually related to the exercise of power.

Furthermore, Pfeffer and Cialdini (1988: 17) maintained that decentralization and delegation of decision making authority is slow to diffuse in the organisation: 'Managerial centralisation and involvement are consistent with beliefs about the potency and efficacy of management and, significantly, lead to an overvaluation of the work produced under tighter management control.' The use of upward influence tactics used by employees would have the effect of neutralising this syndrome by winning over the superior and making him more predisposed towards the employee.

Conflict Theory was also anchored on the concept of power (Bartos, 2002), especially as developed by Dahrendorf (1959), who incorporated important aspects of Weber's (1978) work into a basic schema derived from Marx (1976). In this, 'the concept of authority ... is the fundament of organisation life, in which there are institutionalised superordinate and subordinate positions. The distribution of authority created the basis for competition that plays itself out in specific conflicts. Conflict was seen as the basis of organisational life. ... Order emerges because some members of the society are able to constrain others' (Clegg, 2006: 191). In conflict theory, power plays the role of a key mechanism.

Within this framework, power is exercised in the context of norms (Clegg, 1989). As Clegg, (2006: 194) further suggested, '...when power is exercised organisationally it is always within the context of binding obligations shared by the power wielder and the power subject.' In the case of this study, that would be the obligations between the superior and the subordinate.

In keeping with this rationale, research has suggested that in the case of organisations, divergence created by power and status differentials exists between the superordinate and the subordinate. This can be thwarted by outright resistance and dissent by the subordinate. On the other hand, ingratiation and impression management are upward influence tactics that may be shrewdly and astutely used by the subordinate to subvert and counterbalance the barricades created by the inherent power dynamics in the organisation.

2.8.5 Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated the ubiquity of impression management and ingratiation in organisational communication, in its myriad forms. Among the themes that have been illuminated are silence, dissent, voice, distance between leaders and followers, and trust. All have been widely studied, and in their totality make a substantial contribution to the overall study of leader-follower relations in the workplace. This study seeks to make its own contribution by focusing with particular precision on the communicative dynamics that underpin these processes. Accordingly, the study proceeds to outline a number of fresh research objectives that will explore how impression management in organisations can be best understood as a communicative issue, and how the exchange of information between superiors and subordinates, when viewed from within the general rubric of impression management theory, has the potential to enhance our understanding of the world of organisational theory and practice.

CHAPTER 3

3. THE METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Research design has been defined by Easterby-Smith et al., (1990: 21) as ‘... the overall configuration of a piece of research: what kind of evidence is gathered from where, and how such evidence is interpreted in order to provide good answers to the basic research question[s].’ In line with suggested protocols, this chapter describes the methodology employed by the research, how it evolved, and the manner in which its structure and fabric were formed (Emory and Cooper, 1991).

The chapter begins by identifying the original research aim and objectives, how these evolved and how the methodology was accordingly developed. It provides a rationale for the choice of qualitative over quantitative modes of inquiry and justifies how the study’s quintessentially qualitative methodology proves to be a rational response to the research question. As Giorgi (1970) has remarked, the research method must arise out of a desire to be responsive to the themes and topics being studied. Alvesson and Deetz (2001: 41) have said, ‘In management studies, the study of organisational cultures has been largely anthropological and qualitative, while studies of organisational behaviour ... frequently also draw upon the research ideals dominant in psychology.’ This resonated with Giorgi’s (1970) endorsement, that the research method must be responsive to the fundamental essence of the thesis. Bostrum (1998: 76) maintained that: ‘qualitative research is devoted to the important questions of the underlying values of any social structures in any given communication situation, and what these may or may not mean in our interpretation of them.’ It is ‘... more an

approach, an attitude, an investigative posture with a certain set of goals' (Keen, 1975: 48).

This methodology chapter illuminates what Anderson (1987: 253) maintained, that the ideal form of qualitative research, as was undertaken for this study, is 'inductive, eidetic, subjective, contextual, mundane, textual, preservationistic, interactive and interpretive.' Furthermore, Bostrum (1998: xii) observed that 'in communication, as well as social science in general, inductive methods are receiving greater and greater attention, being studied as qualitative methods or ethnomethodological research.'

Furthermore, this chapter examines the specific rhetoric and vernacular nature of the study, explains ethical issues associated with it and evaluates the Pilot Study, in the light of the process of refining the methodology. The four organisations researched in the thesis are discussed, the interview schedules investigated and the tone and tenor of the semi-structured interviews examined. The type of data that results from the line of inquiry chosen for the fieldwork is reviewed and the techniques for its analysis justified.

This thesis is located within the emerging paradigm of central interpretivist enquiry within the field of organisational communication research, where deficits still exist in the nascent realms of sense-making interpretivist research. This chapter will proceed to examine the significance of organisational story-telling and the interpretation of narratives to this research.

The chapter ends with reflections on the limitations of the methodology and a critique of the approaches employed. All methods have their drawbacks; there is only a choice between different degrees of imperfection. In conclusion, the potential heuristics and biases of the researcher and the interviewees that may lie latent in the study are scanned.

3.1.1 Development Of The Aim And Objectives

At the onset, the methodology chapter begins by evaluating the evolution and progress of the research and the emerging nature of the study. It begins by looking at the original research aims and objectives and how these have been considerably altered to give the research a unique and original edge.

Mintzberg (2005: 361) recommends starting ‘with an interesting question, not a fancy hypothesis. Hypotheses close me down, questions open me up.’ In the case of this research, the focal question of the thesis is, ‘How do impression management tactics and ingratiation impact on the pulse of upward communication in an organisation?’ Mintzberg (2005) advises the researcher to take the lead from behaviour in practice, which is similar to the methodological approach the researcher followed in this thesis. The momentum and impetus of the techniques of communication in organisations from the subordinate to the supervisor are observed, verified, studied and analysed to see whether the patterns that emerge compare to the tenets and prescriptions of impression management and ingratiation theories and how this ultimately impacts on the flow of critical upward communication in organisations.

The quintessence of the study lies in exploring how the schema of impression management and ingratiation theory might be implicated in the transmission and receipt of feedback – this is where the original aims and objectives of the research have evolved substantially by the introduction of the perspective of social psychology to explain upward communication patterns in organisations.

The final research aim of the study as it evolved (2005-2006) is:

- to explore the dynamics of upward communication in organisations

The objectives are to:

1. identify the main barriers, filters and concerns that impede the flow of critical feedback
2. explore the attitudes, changes and forces that stimulate employees to limit the amount of critical feedback they are willing to offer and to explore the impediments managers often put in the way of critical upward feedback, intentionally or otherwise
3. consider how the schema of impression management and ingratiation theory might be implicated in the transmission and receipt of feedback
4. develop a valid, robust qualitative methodology.

See Appendix 17: Table On Original And Current Research Aims And Objectives.

It was originally planned to use a mixed methodology and develop an instrument which could have measured upward communication. It was felt that using a mixed methodology might have reduced the effectiveness of both approaches. The objective was to work with a neat and focused purely qualitative methodology, which will help to capture the essence of soft and sensitive data that is beginning to unfurl.

The selection of the right methodology was a thought provoking and elusive dilemma. Given the constraints of time, suitability and efficiency, the attempted synthesis of the qualitative and quantitative methods was ultimately judged unrealistic and impractical. It was also felt that the attempted amalgamation of the two diverging methods of research might dilute the efficacies and strengths of both methodologies, to the detriment of the clarity and coherence of the research. It was therefore decided that an unadulterated, inductive qualitative methodology, very much on the same lines adopted by Milliken et al., (2003) in her seminal paper on upward communication, might well lend itself to the genre of the research. This study focuses predominantly ‘on the human dimension – imagination, insight, and discovery’ (Mintzberg, 2005: 358). Although quantitative research may be defined as research aiming at reducing ambiguity through transforming perceptions into pre-constructed, quantifiable categories, ‘qualitative research makes possible greater and richer descriptions...increased by the likelihood of developing empirically supported new ideas and theories, together with increased relevance and interest for practitioners’ (Denzin, 1994, Denzin and Lincoln, 2003; Martin and Turner, 1986). Furthermore, ‘practitioners in the field often view questionnaires as superficial and abstractions of quantified material and statistical correlations are as remote from everyday practice ... when dealing with practical aspects of organisational life’ (Alvesson and Deetz, 2001: 56). Results of quantitative approaches can be superficial and lack meaningfulness.

‘Qualitative research is, by definition, stronger on descriptive narratives than on statistical tables’ (Silverman, 2000: 90). It can be argued that narratives, stories and sequences of how human beings communicate with their managers in organisations would lose their delicate nuances and sensitive overtones if reduced to numerical data and clinical statistics. Furthermore, ‘Conventional quantitative organizational research, notwithstanding its use of increasingly complex statistical techniques, often proved to be somewhat simplistic, ahistorical, decontextualized, reductionist, aphiloosophical, and nonreflexive’ (Prasad and Prasad, 2002: 8). As Mintzberg (2005: 366) reiterates, ‘... to connect, you have to keep your research method simple, direct and straightforward.’ *See Appendix 18: The Context of the Research and Appendix 19: Learning Experience.*

3.1.2 The Qualitative And/Or Quantitative Debate And The Ultimate Choice of a Qualitative Methodology

Many researchers have argued against the inherent incompatibility of paradigms, and urged what has been described as a crossing or reconciliation between methodological orientations that in the past have often been regarded as in conflict (Cormon and Poole, 2000). Particularly in the field of communication research, these issues have been intensely debated.

However, in the case of this study, it was concluded that the amalgamated methodological approach was overambitious and impractical. *See Appendix 20: A Map of the Original Qualitative and Quantitative Methodology.*

Alvesson and Deetz (2001: 56) maintained that, 'We do not find the qualitative /quantitative distinction terribly insightful or useful...The critical issue for researchers...involves more fundamental ontological, epistemological, and axiological concerns.' This concern is widely shared (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000, Deetz, 1996, Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Morrow (1994: 207) endorsed this view as follows: 'The predominant distinction between qualitative and quantitative may be quite misleading... it focuses our attention on the techniques through which social life is represented in the course of research, as opposed to representing social reality.'

Strauss and Corbin (1990: 270) have emphasized that the 'qualitative method is a scientific method that meets the criteria of doing good science: significance, theory observation, compatibility, generalizability, reproductability, precision, rigour and verification.' However, it may differ from science in terms of *how* these virtues are realized.

With this in mind and to find the right and fitting methodology for the study, the researcher compared the totally different approaches of the research on upward communication of Kassing (1998) and Milliken et al., (2003). For Kassing (1998), as a quantitative researcher, reality is objective and his approach was therefore presented as unbiased and value free. On the other hand, as a qualitative researcher, Milliken (2003) viewed reality through the eyes of the participants in the study and her reality is hence subjective and multiple. Kassing used a deductive process, which is not just context free, but also accurate and exact through validity and reliability testing. His theories were known '*a priori*' (before the conclusion); he had theories to test from

the outset. Through inference or deduction, the theory was tested and his 'conclusion followed from the premises' (Hart, 2003: 82). On the other hand, Milliken's inductive process was characterized by constantly emerging leitmotifs and categories identified during the continuously evolving research process; it was reliable through verification. Through the process of induction, her proposition was made more probable by the accumulation of confirming evidence '*a posteriori*' (based on experience), 'referring to instances of reasoning in which statements are made [about the phenomenon of silence in upward communication], based on observations of instances of the phenomenon' (Hart, 2003: 82). *See Appendix 21: Deductive and Inductive Modes of Inquiry.*

However, it has been observed that reliability is usually stated to be evidence of objectivity; reliability often relies on the training of the observers, and 'this training means that they are trained with the same biases as those of the trainer (Cooper and Stevenson, 1998: 485). Researchers themselves differ, bringing different concepts and experience to their understanding and interpretation of what the respondents say (Silverman, 2004). Ultimately, all definitions reflect the perspective of the definers (Silverman, 2004).

Morgan (1998: 488) has argued that it is 'potentially misleading..... to invest qualitative methods with the authority of objective science.' The question that follows is therefore whether or not there are objective methods of studying people's social and organisational behaviour and their patterns of communication. Stevenson and Cooper (1998: 159) believe that

‘positivism entails a narrow definition of good science which serves to distance the researcher from the researched...this would imply that the aim...is to understand people...and that one can only understand people by forming social relationships with them, to which scientific objectivity is a barrier.’

Therefore, the questions in the interview schedules of this research were structured in such a manner as to establish a close relationship and rapport with the interviewees – it was only after it was felt that this was established, that the researcher could begin to gently probe into the ingratiation and impression management techniques the interviewee used or was aware of using. Without this vital connection between the interviewer and interviewee, the interview would possibly have not been able to initiate the interviewees to reveal insightful and personal information about rationales behind their communication styles.

In the context of this research, it might be said that the asceticism of scientific objectivity needs to be refashioned. It needs to be accepted that empathy and affinity within the interview need to be in place before the moment when the interviewer can begin to ask probing and personal questions. However, scientific objectivity does come to its own when interpreting the views and opinions and narratives of the interviewees. These need to be deciphered with a conscious effort on the part of the researcher to interpret them as truly and faithfully as possible, without breathing subjective implications and connotations into their interpretation.

A major benefit of qualitative methodology for this thesis is the belief that qualitative methods give us ways of analysing accounts so that within-respondent and between-

respondent comparisons and contrasts can be made. These methods are well-specified and therefore, repeatable as procedures. The researcher's own observations and interpretations can also be checked by using different information sources for the same research method (interviews) and by seeking negative and contrary instances. *See Appendix 22: Choosing a Qualitative or Quantitative Methodology and Appendix 23: The Highlights of Conducting Qualitative Research.*

The generation and development of concepts, categories and propositions is a gradual, reiterative process. Rather, it is ...'inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents' (Strauss and Corbin, 1990: 23). Qualitative methods such as discourse analysis and the exploration of meanings allow the building of linkages and structures into theory. Theory in turn, adds 'an explanatory dimension to the analysis' (Cooper and Stevenson, 1998: 485). As Mintzberg (2005: 368) says, 'What makes me salivate is induction: inventing explanations about things...The world is so rich and varied, that if you see it as it is, you are bound to appear creative.'

This approach is therefore well suited to this study.

'In communication, as well as social science in general, inductive methods are receiving greater and greater attention, being studied as qualitative methods or ethnomethodological research. The goal is to address a particular situation as openly as possible, recognising that the researcher is a participant as well as an observer, and seek relationships or characteristics that might have been overlooked by a less intensive method (Bostrum, 1998: xii).

See Appendix 24: Inductive Analysis in the Research.

Qualitative modes of enquiry lead to progressively understanding human interaction within the fluidity of the social and organisational world. Furthermore, due to the

nature of the research method, ‘it also facilitates an awareness of the process of the construction of accounts and the relationship between the researcher and the subject’ (Cooper and Stevenson, 1998: 485).

Bostrum (1998: 86) believes that there are distinct advantages to using qualitative methods: the value of qualitative research may

‘... be taken to mean that we can relate communicative phenomena to larger categories of cultural and social significance;...the word *hermeneutic* denote[s] this kind of explanation. The most typical method to study hermeneutics is called qualitative research, in that one of its purposes is to seek qualities, not necessarily quantities.’

3.1.3 The Methodological Prototype That Emerged

Finally, on the lines of a pristine qualitative methodology that suited the genre and essence of the research, over a hundred semi-structured interviews in four organisations, across three tiers of management, were analysed in detail. Moreover, the Framework Analysis (Swallow et al., 2003: 612), was used to probe even deeper into the interviews; this involved using ‘Excel spreadsheets in conjunction with the Framework technique provides an alternative to dedicated “code and retrieve” qualitative software programmes.’ *See Appendix 25: The Framework Analysis.*

This simple but effective method of analysis enables the researcher to delve deep into the heart of the data and discover therein myriad nuances of depth and meaning. As Mintzberg (2005: 366) recommends: ‘...Researching is detective work: you have to dig, dig, dig, for every scrap of information you can get....once you have all those notes coded..., you have to weave it all together....and finally, iterate, iterate, iterate...keep correcting, fixing, adjusting, re-conceiving, changing until it feels

right.’ Furthermore, through the natural process of sifting and filtering the data through the Framework Analysis, delicate and meaningful innuendoes, overtones, insinuations and allusions were discovered, that software packages, however sensitive and sophisticated, might not uncover. In the words of a Russian proverb: ‘Believe not in your own friend - believe instead, in your own blind eye.’ *See Appendix 26: Deliberations on Qualitative Analysis Software.*

Mintzberg (2005: 362) highlighted the fact that the imagination is stimulated by rich description; ‘... nuanced exposure, stories and anecdotes are better than measures on seven point scales and the like. If you are going to measure, then measure as much as possible in real terms....’ This is what this research endeavours to do. It evaluates and appraises upward communication and impression management in as realistic, authentic and faithful a manner as is possible, by using an eminently suitable qualitative methodology. Mintzberg (2005: 366) would, undoubtedly, endorse the reasons for the choice of this methodological approach in this research, ‘We are altogether too hung up on fancy methods in our field and in much of the social sciences in general. All too often they lead to banal results, significant only in the statistical sense of the word.’ Given this, it is important to consider the linguistic argument context of the research.

3.1.4 A Linguistic And Philosophical Scrutiny

Language plays a key methodological role in research and philosophy. This is particularly so in the case of this study, that is based on interviews and therefore scrutinizes the discursive processes through which meaning and perceptions of reality are constructed.

Wittgenstein (1889-1951) had concerns about the ways in which the widespread and inappropriate use of language and concepts was utilized to construct arguments about the nature of reality. He focused his attention upon the use of misleading expressions and experienced serious reservations about the attitude of science to truth and generality. Wittgenstein (1953) had a concern, as most researchers do, about the status of truth and falsity: 'His interest was in what makes something either true or false and what kinds of statements are inappropriate for even trying to determine their truth or falsity' (Hart, 1998: 140).

'Language sets everyone the same traps; it is an immense network of easily accessible wrong turnings... For a large class of cases, in which we employ the word 'meaning' it can be defined thus: the meaning of a word is its use in the language' (Wittgenstein, 1931: 370). The result of Wittgenstein's thinking on logic was the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* (1922). Some important and representative propositions or his 'accept and endure' ethics from the book are:

- A proposition is a picture of reality.
- What can be shown cannot be said.
- The limits of my language mean the limits of my world.

However, Alvesson and Deetz (2001: 51) have maintained that:

'postmodernists and other language - focusing philosophies, such as Wittgenstein's, have done much to show that language does not work as the mirror of nature but tends to work in a more complicated way. For instance, language use is metaphorical rather than literal, relies on the repression/denial

of alternate meanings, is local and context related rather than abstract ...and attempts to freeze/define the stable object.'

For instance upward communication is an ongoing phenomenon in the life of people in organisations and the words 'upward communication' carry a sense of ambiguity in both definition and usage. It might mean 'feedback' or it might mean vertical communication from the subordinate to the supervisor. Words get their meaning from the metaphysical context in which they are employed. This rather means that words work in an imaginative and associative rather than in an analytically clear cut manner. The impossibility of fixing a concept is partly related to the ways in which words are informed by the root metaphors for the phenomenon being studied (Brown, 1997, 2000, Morgan, 1998).

For the logical positivists, who believe that logic could be used as the basis of the scientific method of enquiry, science was concerned with the problem of verifying, using reliable methods, the meaning or existence of something. To investigate this, the researcher looked at Kassing's (1998: 191) ODS or Organisational Dissent Scale, a predominantly quantitative instrument to measure organisational dissent through 'evidence of content, and construct validity, temporal stability, and internal consistency.' In his zeal to reduce the different nuances of human action and reaction to numbers, Kassing (1998) proposed that dissent could be expressed as articulated, antagonistic or displaced. Articulated dissent is viewed as constructive and it involves expressing dissent to the management. Antagonistic dissent occurs when the employee knows s/he will be perceived as 'adversarial' and is expressed when the employee believes s/he has a safeguard against retaliation, 'Displaced dissent entails

disagreeing without confronting or challenging' (Kassing, 1998: 192). By a process of three deductive and highly quantitative studies that feed into each other, and staunch in the belief that 'American employees steeped in a tradition that cherishes freedom of speech find it necessary to express their disagreement or contradictory opinions', Kassing's (1998: 191) ODS generated 'evidence of content, and construct validity, temporal stability, and internal consistency' to measure dissent. 'A scientist, whether theorist or experimenter, puts forward statements, or systems of statements, and tests them step by step' (Popper, 1968: 166). This is what Kassing (1998) does in his construction of the ODS model.

There is a vast difference between the vernacular of a quantitative methodology and a qualitative methodology. For instance, Kassing's (1998) quantitative introduction was written from an impersonal, third person point of view and creates a sense of objectivity and distance between the researcher and the subject of research as his hypotheses were tested. However, in qualitative studies like Milliken et al.,'s work (2003), which this study reflects in style, personal pronouns were used in the introduction to convey a personal informal writing style that lessens the epistemological stance between the reader and researcher. Furthermore, rhetorical differences may also be found in tense. In qualitative research, the present tense is used, as in Milliken et al.,'s (2003) work, to connote immediate direct action. In quantitative research, the past tense is usually used to create distance between the study and the project researched.

To be precise, Kassing (1998) used an exact, impersonal style. Concepts and variables are exacting and well defined. Milliken et al.,’s (2003) language was based on a literary form of writing and on definitions that evolved during her study (e.g. ‘cognitive maps’, ‘contagion’, ‘cognitive dissonance’) whereas Kassing’s (1998) quantitative style was concerned with the accuracy and precision of the ODS and uses a deductive form of logic.

Inductive logic prevailed in Milliken’s qualitative methodology. Categories are not identified ‘a priori’ but are built up in the course of her fieldwork. Milliken et al., (2003) functioned in what Creswell (1994) has described as a ‘context bound’ environment, with unknown and as yet to be discovered variables, that leads to the building of patterns or theories, that finally achieve ‘triangulation’ with different sources of information to explain the phenomenon of silence in organizations. Creswell (1994: 11) noted that ‘in qualitative methods, the human and social sciences offer several traditions; [there are] 20 types (of qualitative research styles) and these may be categorised by addressing the characteristics of language, the discovery of regularities, and the comprehension of meaning and reflection.’

3.1.5 Language and Reflexivity – a Post Modern Perspective

Language is the general focus of all post-modern work. Clegg (1989: 151) insisted that in broadest terms, language defines the possibilities of meaningful existence at the same time as it limits them: ‘Through language, our sense of ourselves as distinct subjectivities is constituted. Identity is never regarded as being given by nature; individuality is never seen as being fixed in its expression’ (Clegg, 1989: 151).

Pertinent to this study is the observation by Alvesson and Deetz (2001: 112), that data are constructions made by the researcher, in interaction with the research subjects:

‘Language does not stand in a one to one relationship with non linguistic phenomena such as behaviours, thoughts and feelings. Social reality never determines exactly how words should be composedtexts therefore cannot simply mirror objective reality.’

This has motivated a more reflexive understanding within this research, characterised by an awareness of the interpretive acts and consideration of alternate ways of describing and interpreting the interviews. Reflexivity involves the self-critical consideration of one’s own assumptions and consistent consideration of alternative interpretive lines and the use of different research vocabularies (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 1999; Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). Language does not stand in a one to one relationship to non-linguistic phenomena such as behaviours, thoughts and feelings (Gergen and Gergen, 1991). Social reality never determines exactly how words should be composed and strung together. Texts adhere to conventions for writing and persuading (Calas and Smirich, 1988; Van Maanen, 1988). Rhetoric is an unavoidable element in research studies (Astley, 1985; Brown, 1990; Watson, 1995). It follows that narratives thus cannot simply mirror objective reality. The interviews in this research are therefore perspectives of reality.

Alvesson and Deetz (2001) stress the ambiguities, and the contextual and constructive character of discourse; it cannot easily transport meaning across the local settings in which statements are made. Therefore, language is used in order to accomplish something – to produce effects. Language use is an action and it needs to be

understood in its context, rather than as a carrier of abstract truths to be evaluated against objective reality. This has been kept in mind while the analysis of the interviews has been carried out.

Therefore, as in the case of this research, a vital aspect of reflexive research... is that it should be 'language sensitive' (Alvesson and Deetz, 2001: 117). Furthermore,

'characteristics of language use complicate how accounts of interviewees as well as actors observed can be used in research. These involve the metaphorical and contextual nature of language, that language use typically is functional rather than truth-oriented and that social norms and conventions guide and constrain language use' (Alvesson and Deetz, 2001: 117).

3.1.6 Is Language A Mirror?

The assumption that language is a mirror of objective reality stipulates that language can represent or 'mirror' reality in an objective fashion. The relationship between language and reality is thus seen as a relationship of correspondence. As it is assumed that language has the capacity to represent reality, it is treated as a representational system available to the researchers in their endeavour to describe reality objectively.

This idea has been widely critiqued (e.g. Rorty, 1979). In particular, advocates of interpretive approaches reject all three of the above assumptions for several reasons, advocates of interpretive approaches regard subject and object as constituting an inseparable relation. As Giorgi (1970:7) noted, 'there are not two independent entities, object and subjects existing in themselves which later get to relate to each other, but the very meaning of subject implies a relationship to an object and to be an object intrinsically implies being related to subjectivity.'

Advocates of interpretive approaches claim that it is not possible to produce an objective description of reality. Instead, their basic argument is that our descriptions are always coloured by our specific historical, cultural, ideological, gender-based, and linguistic understanding of reality. Thus, instead of assuming an objectivist epistemology for the existence of objective reality, advocates of interpretive approaches typically claim that reality is socially constructed by continuous negotiation between people about the very nature of that reality (Cooren et al., 2006). Finally, the assumption that reality is socially constructed means language is not seen as a representational system that can be used to classify and name objective reality. In this study, the narratives of the interviews cannot, therefore, mirror reality.

3.2.1 The Interpretivist Approach

This research is embedded in what Bryman (2001) labels ‘interpretivism.’ It is situated within the emerging paradigm of central interpretivist enquiry in the field of organisational communication research. Qualitative organizational research arose partly in response to certain significant limitations of conventional quantitative and positivistic organizational research. Within this paradigm, interpretive research can be conceptualised as a subset of qualitative research (Prasad and Prasad, 2002). Accordingly, this part of the methodology chapter will proceed to examine the significance of organisational sense making, story-telling and the interpretation of narratives to the study.

Traditionally, knowledge and scholarship about action and activities in organizations have been produced from quantitative approaches within the positivistic research tradition. However, during the past three decades, the strong growth of interpretive approaches arose from dissatisfaction with the methods and procedures for producing scientific knowledge within positivistic research (Alvesson and Sköldberg, 1999; Denzin and Lincoln, 1994, 2000; Prasad and Prasad, 2002; Sandberg, 2001a).

The development of the interpretive research tradition is often traced back to ideas from Weber (1947) that subsequently have been developed further by phenomenological sociologists such as Schutz, 1945, 1953; Berger and Luckmann (1966), Giddens (1984), and Bourdieu (1990). However, the more influential approaches are various forms of social constructionism (Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Bourdieu, 1990; Giddens, 1984, 1993), critical theory (Alvesson and Deetz, 2000;

Habermas, 1971. 1984), ethnomethodology (Atkinson and Heath 1987; Silverman, 1998), interpretive ethnography (Denzin, 1997; Van Maanen, 1995) symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969; Mead, 1934; Prasad, 1993), discourse analysis (Fairhurst, 2007; Foucault, 1972), deconstructionism (Derrida, 1972/1981), gender approaches (Calas and Smircich, 1988), and sense-making approaches (Weick, 1995). Despite the great variety of approaches, which are reflected in the methodology of this study, what unifies them is their phenomenological base, which stipulates that person and world are inextricably related through lived experience of the world (Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Gadamer, 1976; Heidegger, 1927/1981).

In as much as this is so, a purely qualitative interpretive methodology was chosen for this study as the most suitable methodology for the sensitive and personal nature of the study. ‘Not everything that counts can be counted and not everything that can be counted counts’ (Albert Einstein, 1926). The manner in which human beings in organisations communicate with their supervisors and why they do so in a certain manner, do not believably reflect in numerical values. However, this study endeavours to be research that accounts for ‘the human dimension – imagination, insight, discovery’ (Mintzberg, 2005: 358).

In practice, contemporary interpretive research is committed to the broad philosophy of social construction (Berger and Luckmann, 1967), which sees social reality as a constructed world built in and through meaningful interpretation and secondly, that the goal of the researcher, therefore, is not to capture the essence of a constructed world but to understand this process of symbolic world-making (Schwandt, 1994).

This is the ontological and epistemological commitment at the heart of this interpretive research.

Hence, within interpretive approaches, the human world is never a world in itself; it is always an experienced world, that is, a world that is always related to a conscious subject. Thus, the ontological and epistemological assumptions underlying the interpretive research tradition reject the existence of an objective knowable reality beyond the human mind. Instead, they stipulate that knowledge is constituted through lived experience of reality.

Therefore, interviews, of which this study is constructed, are characterised by highly intensive interpretation, much of it non-reflective and non-conscious, not only on the part of the interviewer-researcher, but also on the part of the interviewee, who is actively trying to make sense of who the interviewer is, what he or she is characterised by in terms of pre-structured understanding, what the research project is all about and what may come out of it, of relevance for the interviewee.

3.2.3 The Art of Interpretation: Insight Production

Alvesson and Deetz (2001) have explained that interpretation is based on the studying of delimited parts in the context of the whole - or rather a variety of wholes. Interpretation may attend to details or more aggregated kinds of phenomenon. Normally there is a circling – gradually emerging into a helix like movement – around a focus on details and on the wholes. Interpretation may therefore border in a triangle between non-obvious description, the prespectivization, imagination and the insightful revelation of the ‘something’ – in itself as part of a larger whole.

It calls for careful consideration of all empirical material from a multitude of angles.

Alvesson and Deetz (2001: 148) insisted:

‘All material... in an interview may be seen as outcomes of the interaction between the researcher and the interviewee. Empirical material is the result of a complex interplay between research process – induced influence, norms and conventions for expression in particular settings, work-place cultures, social conditions and the interviewee’s experiences, interests (including ideas on how this research may reflect back on the organisation and his or her career in indirect ways), intentions, and values.’

3.2.3 Impression Management in Interviews: A Critical View

Alvesson and Deetz (2001: 118) pointed out that accounts by interviewees:

‘may... be more appropriately be understood in terms of a desire to create certain impressions – of rationality, brightness, smartness, morality – or to get the conversation going without too much confusion or disruption. When employees appear reliable - which they often do - such appearance may be understood in terms of the desire to appear trustworthy rather than a certain sign of them essentially being so.’

This does not imply that interviewees are necessarily dishonest, manipulative or eager to do anything to communicate a favourable impression or self-image. In an

organisational context, it is not inconceivable that people being interviewed are politically conscious and may use the research project for their own purposes or simply slant their descriptions of organisational reality Even during their discussions on negative behaviours ‘it is important for the interviewees to give an impression of being trustworthy when they talk about manipulations ... and other amoral behaviours...’ (Alvesson and Deetz, 2001: 118)

Post structuralism and postmodernism therefore (Alvesson and Deetz, 2001: 119) ‘oppose the idea of the individual as autonomous and consistent, as a bearer of meaning and intentionality.’ Instead the subject is perceived as constituted by discourses – more or less systematic forms of knowledge, ways of reasoning and definitions of reality entrenched in linguistic practices – and as fragmented in relation to the multiplicity of its constituent mechanisms and processes (Deetz, 1992; Linstead and Grafton-Small, 1992, Shotter and Gergen, 1989; Willmott, 1994). The implication is that the researcher must be aware of how precarious, as well as powerful, language is. This is an important methodological issue that has relevance to this study.

3.2.4 Truth in a Tight Spot

The dilemma interpretive researchers face can be stated in the following way: at the same time as advocates of interpretive research deny the possibility of producing objective knowledge, they want to claim that the knowledge they generate is authentic in some way or another. Despite their rejection of objective truth, as Wachterhouser (2002: 71) proposed, we can still ‘develop, apply, and retest criteria of

knowledge that give us enough reliable evidence or rational assurance to claim ... that we in fact know something and do not just surmise or opine that it is the case.'

This means that from the point of view of an interpretive approach, it is only meaningful to talk about truth with reference to the perspective taken by the researcher. However, Schrag (1992: 75) argued that the problem with perspectival truth claims is 'that there appears to be an unmanageable surplus of truths.' Schrag proposed one way of dealing with pluralistic truth claims by assessing one specific truth claim in conjunction with others dealing with the same issue. Other researchers such as Guba and Lincoln (1989) and Polkinghorne (1983) have argued in a similar vein. The idea of 'correcting' by comparing alternative knowledge claims can be found in Hirsch's (1967) claim that the requirement of certainty should be replaced by a probability judgment, Ricoeur's (1971) discussion on validation as an argumentative discipline comparable to the juridical procedures of legal interpretation, Habermas's (1990) discussion on achieving trustworthiness and knowledge through communicative action, House's (1980) discussion of validity in evaluation seen as an argumentative discourse, and Norén's (1995) trustworthy knowledge.

Therefore, assessing truth claims is an iterative process of correcting and comparing alternative knowledge claims within a certain research perspective as well as between specific research perspectives. It can lead to a deeper understanding of the aspect of human activity under investigation. This means that truth achieved within interpretive approaches, as in this study, will never be one final and unambiguous truth but rather

is an ongoing and open process of knowledge claims correcting and balancing each other.

Furthermore, when analyzing empirical material such as interview transcripts, communicative validity can be achieved by striving for coherent interpretations (e.g., Eisner, 1985; Karlsson, 1993). The principle of coherence is based on the notion of the hermeneutic circle (Palmer, 1972), which stipulates that interpretation is constituted by a circular relation between parts and whole. For example, a text can be understood only in relation to its parts and, conversely, the parts can be understood only in relation to the text as a whole. Hence, striving for coherence means that the parts of a text must fit the whole and the whole must fit the parts.

Because researchers cannot escape their interpretations, one appropriate criterion of reliability in researching lived experience is the researcher's interpretive awareness (Sandberg, 1994, 1995). To maintain an interpretive awareness means to acknowledge and explicitly deal with our subjectivity throughout the research process instead of overlooking it. This form of reliability can be discussed in terms of Kvale's (1996) notion of *biased subjectivity* and *perspectival subjectivity*. Biased subjectivity simply results in unprofessional work with biased researchers principally making notes of statements that support their own opinions, selectively interpreting statements so they can justify their own conclusions, and tending to ignore counter evidence. In contrast, researchers exercising perspectival subjectivity, as has been endeavoured by this researcher, are more aware of how their own interpretations are influenced by the particular disciplinary, theoretical, and methodological perspectives

taken in the study. For instance, when examining employee silence (Milliken et al., 2003), the study was liable to be persuaded by the legal background of the researcher, making the semi conscious connection that silence, (in law), means consent and then connecting this silence → consent/accord/agreement to the facet of conformity in ingratiation theory (Jones, 1964). Thus, with this awareness, interpretation then becomes strength rather than a threat to reliable results.

Another strategy of dealing with this is the phenomenological epoché (Sandberg, 1994), which underlies most forms of phenomenology. The aim of epoché is to ensure that the researcher withholds his or her theories and prejudices when interpreting lived experience. The epoché does not mean, however, that the researcher must or can bracket all previous experience (Giorgi, 1990; Ihde, 1977). To reiterate, as researchers, we interpret the research object within particular disciplinary, theoretical, and methodological perspectives. The point behind the epoché, as Giorgi (1990: 71) expressed it, is ‘to bracket that knowledge which is relevant to the issue at hand.’ That is, researchers should restrain themselves from routinely applying their known theories and prejudices to the experience under investigation. According to Ihde (1977: 36), phenomenological epoché requires ‘that looking precede judgement and that judgement of what is ‘real’ or ‘most real’ should be suspended until all the evidence (or at least sufficient evidence) is in.’

3.2.5 Story Telling in Narrative Research: The Interview as a Story

Gabriel (2000: 6) argued that ‘stories’ in organisations are relatively special narrative phenomena:

‘Not all stories are good stories, nor are all individuals effective story tellers. Stories, it will be argued, should not be seen as automatically dissolving ‘facts.’ Instead narratives and experience must be treated as having a material basis even if this basis is opaque or inaccessible. The relationship between facts and story is plastic – stories interpret events, infusing them with meaning though distortions, omissions, embellishments, and other devices, without ...obliterating the facts.’

Furthermore, Mintzberg (2005: 362) emphasised the need to be stimulated by rich description: ‘And stories are the best of all, because while hard data may suggest some relationship, it is this kind of rich description that best helps to explain it.’ The semi structured interviews that constituted the fieldwork conducted by the researcher were interpreted and analysed as ‘stories’, as ‘tales, ‘as yarns.’ Furthermore,

‘Poetic license is every storyteller’s prerogative – the acknowledged right to twist the facts for effect. This is the basis of the bond that unites storyteller and audience. The audience suspends disbelief, allowing the storyteller to apply his or her craft to the material... Not merely recounting ‘events’, but interpreting them, enriching them, enhancing them, and infusing them with meaning. Omissions, exaggerations, subtle shifts in emphasis, timing innuendo, and metaphors are some of the mechanisms used. Far from being an obstacle to further study, such ‘distortions’ can be approached as attempts to re-create reality poetically’ (Gabriel, 2000: 31).

Organisational stories are not static. As such,

‘Organisational stories do not stand as obelisks or pyramids in a barren landscape. Instead, their texts constantly evolve, they compete, they merge, and they often disappear, at times to reappear out of nowhere. Many stories... coexist in different versions, rarely coming into direct conflict or competition, pursuing errant careers within organisations, like furtive thoughts or fantasies. As long as a story remains ‘alive’, new meanings may be uncovered’ (Gabriel, 2000: 34).

There are times, however, when stories crystallize around particular interpretations. Different versions may diverge in numerous details but seem to agree on the story's core symbolism. (Boje, 1991, 1997). The symbolism seems very powerful and the stories being treated as part of the culture and the heritage of an organisation or of a group: 'When researchers encounter such stories, they may sense that what is being related is no mere trifle of organisational life but something deeply significant. It is offered to them on the basis of trust and respect, the way that a valuable artefact might have been' (Gabriel, 2000: 42). In these instances, the researcher has tried to try to delve deeper into the story, seeking to analyse the reasons why it has such a powerful grip over the organisation... and whether indeed it has a deeper meaning. As Ricoeur (1970: 80) has argued, 'to interpret is to understand a double meaning.'

Because stories are emotionally and symbolically charged narratives, they do not present information or facts about 'events' but they enrich, enhance, and infuse facts with meaning. This is both their strength and potential defect (Boje, 1991, 2006).

Gabriel (2000: 135) argued that:

'researchers who want to use stories as a research instrument must be prepared to sacrifice at least temporarily some of the core values of their craft and adopt instead a rather alien attitude towards their subjects and their texts. They must rid themselves of the assumption that quality data must be objective, reliable, accurate etc., and must be prepared to engage personally with the emotions and meanings that reside in the text...instead they must learn to relish the narrative.'

This researcher has kept in mind Gabriel's (2000: 136) advice to the interviewee to be

'... a fellow traveller on the narrative, someone who combines passivity with activity, is keen to engage with the interviewee's stories emotionally,

displaying interest, empathy, and pleasure in the process... The researcher's demeanour, attentiveness, and reactions play a decisive role in the generation of stories. Any display of judgemental or critical orientation might to discourage storytelling. A researcher perceived by his respondents as a cold figure...or as a forensic investigator interested in facts is unlikely to elicit many stories.'

Gabriel had very definite views on the use of the tape recorder, 'If the researcher uses a tape recorder, this risks intimidating or unnerving potential storytellers. The presence of a tape recorder may seriously inhibit organisational participants from telling tales that may not be factually backed up', or even compromise them with their colleagues, subordinates or superiors' (Gabriel, 2000: 140). Nonetheless, it was decided, to use a tape-recorder in the interviews conducted for this research. Otherwise, the research would have had to rely on either hand written notes or recollection. Written notes have a less disturbing effect than tape recorders but nevertheless slow down the story-telling and undermine the naturalness of the setting. Recollection is not regarded as a very reliable method of recording data.

The most evident danger of story-based research is the selective use of organisational narratives to amplify or reinforce the researcher's preconceived ideas or assumptions. Organisational narratives then become ingredients in the researcher's own agenda. Another danger of story-based research is the risk of regarding the stories as facts. (Boje, 2006). Yet, philosophers of science, especially Kuhn (1962) and Feyerabend (1981, 1978) have established that even scientists talking about facts are often making use of inferences, assumptions, frames of reference, presenting plausible stories rather than describing 'objective' interpretations.

The opposite danger, however, is to regard everything as narrative and lose sight of the importance of actual events. Between the externality of an objective world and the denial of all externality, Gabriel (2000) advocated the use of organisational stories as poetic contributions on everyday events and as expressions of deeper organisational and personal realities.

The exploration of narratives in the human sciences is still in its early stages. Treating a story simply as a text, disregarding the extent to which it deviates from or distorts facts and ignoring the effort and ingenuity that it demands, does grave injustice to the story and the story teller alike and warps the authenticity of the research.

3.2.6 Sensemaking And Identity

The sage of sensemaking is Karl E. Weick. His work is now contained in two volumes (Weick, 1995, 2001) and deals with what Pugh and Hickson (1996: 124) have termed 'rolling hindsight' at both an individual and group level. It is a generic theory, built on a wealth of other researchers' psychological data, re-analysed by Weick.

Weick (2001: 8) used the analogy of cartography to describe the process of sensemaking; there are indefinite numbers of plausible maps that can be constructed to help explain reality. Sensemaking is also a social activity in which the 'maps' of others are compared with our own; thus the terrain keeps changing as we try to 'carve out a momentary stability in this continuous flow' (Weick, 2001: 9). Organisations

are viewed as sensemaking systems in which members continually reaffirm to one another the truth of reality as they see it and thus the action required. As Pugh and Hickson (1996: 125) described it, 'The development of a 'generic sensemaking', within which individuals differ yet sufficiently concur, maintains sense of the organisation.'

What characterises this approach is the importance of identity, above all the identity of the individuals or group. Identity forms a key part of sensemaking in organisations. We construct and develop our sense of identity, from interacting with others. Reflecting on events and states allows us to further develop our sense of identity. 'Sensemaking needs a sensemaker' (Hannabus, 2002: 405). Ethnographically sensemaking leads to attempts to interpret, first by the sensemakers (like employees or managers), and second by any researcher involved in examining sensemaking by employees or managers.

As Parry (2003: 240) remarked, 'We take for granted the social and cognitive processes that we employ to socially construct the organisations in which we work. Our beliefs, assumptions, stories and interactions with others help us to bring order to what is going on, to make sense of our own reality.' Similarly, Czarniawska (1998) argued that narratives became the main carriers of knowledge in modern societies toward the end of the twentieth century.

Weick (1991) would have approved of the researcher's reliance on narrative:

‘If accuracy is nice but not necessary in sensemaking, then what is necessary? The answer is, ‘something that preserves plausibility and coherence, something that is reasonable and memorable that embodies past experience and expectations, something that resonates with other people, something that can be constructed retrospectively but also can be used prospectively, something that captures both feeling and thought, something that allows for embellishment to fit current oddities, something that is fun to construct ... in short, what is necessary in sensemaking is a good story’ (Weick, 1991: 60-61).

Because sensemaking is grounded in identity construction and based on plausibility, and also because it is ‘enactive of sensible environments and focused on extracted cues’ (Weick, 1995: 7), individuals in different environments make sense of things differently. There may also be differences in how causality is assigned at different developmental and hierarchical levels. People at higher developmental levels understand the world as a more complex and connected place and their sensemaking is expected to be more complex and layered (Weick, 1991).

There is an increased ‘recognition that organisations, like other social groups, reveal things about their customs and rituals, symbols and transactions when observed and studied in the manner of an anthropologist’ (Hannabus, 2000: 404). Insider-research using interviews, as has been done in this study, typify this approach. Moreover, ‘there is a further recognition that people make sense of situations, events and states in important and investigable ways: the discourse they use to describe these situations, events and states is ...part and parcel of sensemaking, by the researcher as well as by all stakeholders involved’ (Hannabus, 2002: 404). Even though criteria or variables might be established in advance, interview schedules designed, and outcomes identified, ‘nevertheless it is regarded as important to examine not just what

happens but what the actors thought happened, what led up it, what caused it, how participants acted, whether they were right or wrong, fair or unfair' (Hannabus, 2002: 405).

3.2.7 Limitations Of The Interview Technique

However suitable the interview technique is in obtaining rich data, the researcher is aware of its possible anomalies.

First of all, as Bostrum (1998: 75) has said, 'Many 'rational' explanations for communicative behaviour simply don't get into interviews... Occasionally individuals give socially acceptable answers (not necessarily the correct answers) ...Often a deeper analysis is needed to reveal the 'real' reasons why individuals act the way they do.' The rich variety and diversity of the social and organisational world are deliberately suppressed in order to make it fit procedures and correspond to issues being researched - and to give an impression of objectivity. The standardisation of social phenomena like upward communication risks involving a basic distortion of reality:

'We bundle into our work the values, biases and assumptions of the paradigms laid down by (unknown) others (philosophers, methodologists and system experts) who have done the ground work from which we borrow' (McGrath et al., 1993: 29).

The questions in the interview schedules of this study were structured in such a manner as to establish a rapport with the interviewees – it was only after it was felt that this was established, that probes began into the ingratiation and impression management techniques the interviewee used, saw being used or was aware of using.

Without this vital empathy between the interviewer and interviewee in place, the interviewer would possibly have not been able to initiate the interviewees into discussing and reveal insightful and personal information about their communication styles and their rationales for this. And yet, could this connection to the interviewee be looked upon as a barrier to scientific objectivity?

It might be reasoned, that the concept of scientific objectivity needs to be redefined. Empathy and affinity within the interview need to be in situ before the interviewer can begin to ask probing and personal questions. However, as Cooper and Stevenson (1998) emphasized, scientific objectivity does come to its own when interpreting the views and opinions and narratives of the interviewees. These need to be deciphered with a conscious effort on the part of the researcher to interpret them as truly and faithfully as possible, without breathing subjective implications and connotations into their interpretation. Striving for objectivity is itself an ethical concern. As (Mussachia, 1995) argued, good research by definition tends to procedures and standards that prevent biases from inordinately influencing whatever the research's outcomes will be.

However, Alvesson and Deetz (2001: 61) pointed out that despite these noble aspirations, objectivity as the principal value of research is hard to sustain:

‘The world, in itself, is fundamentally indeterminate; it is made determinant in specific ways by human interests and our way of relating to it. Facts and data are produced and make sense only in the context of a particular framework that allows and guides us to see certain things and neglects others. ...The researcher is part of a socially constructed world. What passes as a neutral, remotely distanced position is a particular shared social position.’

Nonetheless, this does not imply that all research is subjective. It means that the milieu around the researcher, the respondents and the data gathered is ‘not a sterile platform but an arena of constant and ongoing cognitive interaction, assumptions and social conventions, which makes the pursuit of a higher objectivity somewhat futile’ (Alvesson and Deetz, 2001: 64). As cynical as this may sound, a denial of the social nature of this research means that the idiosyncrasies of the researcher – the particular mix and dynamics social influences affecting his or her subjectivity – ‘...are hidden under a false image of objectivity’ (Alvesson and Deetz, 2001: 65).

3.2.8 The Obscurities Within Interviews

Alvesson and Deetz (2001) have pointed out that interviews are time consuming and lead to varied responses from interviewees. Qualitative interviews according to Potter and Wetherall (1987), are relatively loosely structured and open to what the interviewee feels is relevant and important to talk about, within the bounds of what appears to be relevant. ‘Interviewees are less constrained by the researchers’ pre-understanding and preferred language... There is space for negotiation of meanings so that some level of mutual understanding may be accomplished, making data richer and more meaningful’ Alvesson and Deetz (2001: 72). Many more complex and varied descriptions are therefore made possible (Bryman et al, 1998, Fontana and Frey, 1994).

Nonetheless, there are external sources of influence in interviews that cannot be minimized or controlled. Silverman (1998, 1994) stressed that the value of interview statements that are, in many cases, limited in terms of their capacity to reflect reality and their world of the employees. This is because the discourse of the interviewee and the questions of the interviewer are liable to be related to the interview context rather than to any 'experiential reality' (Alvesson and Deetz, 2001: 71). Moreover, they are affected by the prescribed cultural scripts of how one should normally express oneself on particular topics (Potter and Wetherall, 1987, Shotter and Gergen, 1999, 1994). Alvesson and Deetz (2001: 72) reiterated that, 'An interview is a kind of social situation, a kind of conversation, and that which is said is far too context dependant to be seen as a mirror of what goes on outside this specific situation, either in the mind of the interviewee or in the organisation out there.'

Although this might be so, it has been suggested by Fontana and Frey (1994) that establishing a close personal contact with the interviewees, which makes them be seen as participants rather than as respondents, may minimise this problem. They emphasise the value of engaging in a real conversation, with empathic understanding and the give and take of dialogue: 'This makes the interview sound more honest, morally sound and reliable, because it treats the respondent as an equal, allows him or her to express personal feelings and therefore presents a more realistic picture....' (Fontana and Frey, 1994: 371). Researchers can never be certain what expectations research subjects have, how honest they are, or how realistic and unstained by bias their views may be. Alvesson and Deetz (2001) have suggested that to appear honest, socially competent and articulate calls for considerable impression management. This

is an intriguing idea, considering that one of the facets of this research is the use of impression management in upward communication. Alvesson and Deetz (2001: 194) stressed, 'One cannot get round the context-dependency of the interview statements-one cannot neglect that they are produced in a specific social situation and that language games are important. The metaphorical, constitutive, and performance-oriented aspects of talk cannot be disregarded.' Nevertheless, '...one should, therefore, be prepared not to see interviewees as truth tellers, but as politically conscious actors. Such actors, however, may well produce informative accounts' Alvesson and Deetz (2001: 195).

Another possible problem with interviews is that interview accounts give the impression of the interviewee as rational and moral. Most people may suspect that what they say could reflect back on themselves or the company. Sometimes, employees suspect that the researcher may have offered something to top management in return for access; they may even believe that the researcher is a spy for top management (Easterby-Smith et al, 1991). Reassurances that the interviews will be treated confidentially and that all quotations will be anonymous may only be partly effective. A lot of interview talk, may, therefore, be devoid of much critical material. On the other hand, some employees may feel frustrated at the workplace, or for one reason or another, may want to use the researcher as a tool for seeking revenge by telling negatively biased stories. Adopting a professional approach to minimise these problems constitutes a major challenge, even for experienced interviewers (Millar, Crute and Hargie, 1992; Millar, 2000).

3.2.9 The Context of Interviews

Alvesson and Deetz (2001) advised researchers that great care must be taken in the interpretation of the local meanings produced (during interviews) and that caution and reflection should colour any generalisations other than the temporary one of the interview. It is of particular importance here to appreciate how actors' (interviewees) accounts may be seen as expressions of their identities:

'Identities frame and structure how we provide accounts of complex phenomena, the affect what we focus on, what we neglect and how we describe what we focus on. However, identity is best understood as unstable, multiple and responsive to the discourses interpellating the subject. The interviewer must be aware of how responses of the (interviewee) are coloured by the identities triggered by the language used in research interviews' (Alvesson and Deetz, 2001: 124).

Furthermore, factors like ethnicity, personal and work experience, basic character traits, socio-economic status, and the gender of the person being interviewed compound his/her identity as an employee/manager to produce an expression of a 'multiplicity in their accounts of themselves and their situation' (Alvesson and Deetz, 2001: 124).

For instance, Laurent (1978) noted, that managers often describe themselves as 'superiors' but do not mention that they are also subordinates who have 'higher' managers. This does not reflect the real work situation or their beliefs about it, but a kind of subjectivity about feelings, values, and cognitions and self-perception-associated with managerial/superior identity triggered by the research situation. The multiplicity of identity in complex organisations was demonstrated in the empirical study of Watson (1994), which presents a more nuanced picture of the interviewee and his experiences of equality, subordination, superiority and ambiguity. This is

similar to dynamics in the interviews with middle management encountered in this study.

Therefore, in an ideal situation, it is necessary to be skilful at intellectually grasping the identity dynamics during interviews, avoiding errors like prematurely fixing a certain position (for instance like asking a blank question, 'Please describe your communication style?') and encouraging more multi-faceted accounts before gradually attaining a focus and exploring themes of particular interest. However, there are limits to which interviews can be rationalised.

3.2.10 Gender

In the case of gender it is likely that deep changes in context have taken place. Today women are Presidents and CEOs and astronauts as well as mothers and wives and nurses and secretaries. Nonetheless, critical management research does not recommend taking gender in to account. Gergen and Gergen (1991) proposed that the idea that there are two genders should be dropped within the social sciences. Fraser and Nicholson (1988) and Scott (1991) refused to accept the terms 'women' and 'men.' They maintained that the label 'gender' is also misleading as it indicates homogeneity among half of the population with particular biological equipment. This may encourage easily reproduced stereotypical ideas (Alvesson and Billing, 1997). They believe that historical awareness calls a dramatic change in applying concepts, like gender, that may have made sense in the past, but do not necessarily produce meaningful and productive interpretations. However, the persuasiveness of this claim

is questionable and this research has recorded and registered the differences in the tenor of the responses between the men and women respondents.

3.3.1 The Sample, The Organisations And The Fieldwork

3.3.2 Introduction

The purpose of this subsection of the methodology chapter is to look at the actual research methodology and the methods used in sampling, data collection and analysis. It also explains and justifies the study methods adopted in the research and the logic of the approach used. It sets out:

1. the pilot study conducted in Winter, 2004: this facilitated the fine tuning of the interview schedules and interview techniques. The interview schedules are attached as Appendixes 32 and 33, to show how they were refined to use to gather data within the four organisations chosen.
2. the conceptualising and planning of the main part of the data collection and how contacts were initiated and developed and how the interviews were planned and executed.
3. a brief look at the four organisations in Scotland, where the interviews were held
4. a theoretical discussion of the intricacies of the interviews.

3.3.3 Pilot Study. Winter, 2004

‘Do not take the risk. Pilot test first’ (De Vaus 1993: 54).

The term ‘pilot study’ is used in various ways in social science research. It can refer to ‘small scale version/s or trial run/s, done in preparation for the major study’ (Polit *et al.*, 2001: 467) or the pre-testing or ‘trying out’ of a particular research instrument (Baker 1994: 182-3).

Pilot studies have been described as ‘underdiscussed, underused and underreported’ (Prescott and Soeken, 1989: 60). Complete reports of pilot studies are rare in the research literature (Lindquist, 1991; Muoio et al, 1995, van Teijlingen et al. 2001).

However, one of the main advantages of conducting a pilot study is being able to identify where research protocols may not have been followed or whether proposed methods or instruments, when translated into reality, prove to be inappropriate or impractical. In particular, the piloting of qualitative approaches has proved to be useful before the introduction of the main methodology, ‘particularly when using the interview technique’ (Holloway 1997: 121).

The pilot study was conducted in Winter, 2004, as a trial run for the main interview strategies, but over a shorter time frame and with a smaller sample. The insights gained from the trial run of the interview techniques provided the honing needed to refine, improve and enhance the methodology of the thesis.

The pilot study was conducted at a Faculty at a University in Scotland. Three participants were interviewed, the Dean of the Faculty, (Participant A) the Head of a School (Participant B) and a Lecturer at the School (Participant C). In a pilot study, the representativeness of the subjects of the pilot study is critical in as much as it needs to reflect the schema of the main data collection. Interviews at three levels within the hierarchies of the organisations selected were planned and the three interviews of the pilot study therefore aimed at mirroring the model intended for use for the interviews of the main research; namely, interviews in the organisations

selected at three levels, the Management Level, the Middle-management level and the Employee Level.

It took a considerable amount of time and effort to contact the subjects chosen for the pilot study, explain the research to them and establish the interviews. Two of the five interviewees originally selected did not respond favourably and it was clear that many of the chosen targets for the main study might also choose not to participate in the research. This reinforced the initial thought that extra time and persistent effort would need to be devoted to the task of contacting the prospective interviewees, explaining the research to them, persuading them to participate in the interviews and then fixing the schedules, keeping in mind their convenience, their own time-schedule and also the importance of getting a proper sample in all the four organisations within which research was going to be carried out.

In structuring the interview, every attempt was made to ensure that the questions chosen for the interviews of the pilot study represented the themes of the literature review of the main study.

For instance, when identifying the most used impression management tactic, Participants A, B and C chose 'Opinion Conformity' (Tactic No. 3 in the Table of Upward Influence Tactics) as the tactic that they have most seen used and have often used them. 'Opinion Conformity' is one of the main facets of Ingratiation Theory (Jones, 1964) and has been described as a person expressing an opinion or behaving in a manner that is 'consistent with the opinions, judgements, or behaviour of the target individual' (Jones, 1964: 34). It follows the proposition that people like

individuals whose values and beliefs appear to be similar to their own. In communicating with the supervisor, the subordinate therefore attempts to conform outwardly to the style and beliefs of the superior, in speaking up or remaining silent, in the anticipation that his feedback to the superior might be well received. Moreover, other researchers on the tactics of verbal self-presentation agree that 'Opinion Conformity' is one of most commonly used forms of impression management used by subordinates when delivering upward communication. (Jones, 1964; Wood and Mitchell, 1981; Gardner and Martinko, 1988), Tedeschi and Melburg, 1984, Wortman and Linsenmeier, 1977). This was an exciting moment in the initial research and reinforced the confidence that the research enquiries were on a positive trajectory.

In the interests of comparability and credibility, the three interviews of the pilot study had the same structured approach. After the pilot study, the list of questions originally made up for the interviews was reorganised and streamlined. The time frame expected from the interviewee was an hour and no more. Therefore, the questions needed to be structured in such a way as to maximise the amount of relevant information that could be obtained from them within this time frame.

The first interview schedule in Appendix 32 is a list of the original interview questions. It is a long, rambling list of questions. However, the revised interview schedule (Appendix 33) is a shorter, more succinct register of the questions that evolved as the pilot study progressed and is therefore better tailored to the thrust of the interviews of the main study. It is considerably shorter and much more focused than the first list of questions. For instance, Questions 4-6 of the first interview

schedule were omitted from the revised interview questions. These are questions such as, ‘Describe the way in which decisions are made in your organisation’ / ‘Describe your unit’s or organisation’s primary objectives for the year’ / ‘What are your personal objectives?’ / ‘What communication strategies does one use to achieve them?’ / ‘what kind of communication is it necessary for you to have with other work unit?’ The questions in the revised interview schedule were also reworded and changed in order to facilitate a natural flow of themes and enhance the logical narrative of the interview. For instance, the weaknesses and strengths of the organisation were established before the channels and styles of upward communication were discussed. The pilot study, therefore, helped to get the structure of the interview right.

Another important dimension of the pilot study was the realisation that the subject of the research is sensitive, subtle and delicate. Even though the word ‘ingratiation’ was not used in the interviews because of its possibly negative connotation, the pilot study further revealed that people, more often than not, do not like to speak openly about impression management tactics they might have seen used or use themselves because they believe that this might suggest devious intent. For instance, Participant C of the pilot study was extremely wary, restrained and guarded about talking openly on any aspect of impression management tactics. It was therefore decided to fashion a visual prop for the next pilot interview, to try and diffuse the discomfiture the interviewee might feel on being asked questions that might be perceived as awkward or sensitive and therefore invasive. This was in the form of a table of upward influence tactics often used by employees while communicating with supervisors to create a

favourable impression and to be well thought of. This helped immensely in the interviews with Participants B and C, who spoke with élan on impression management and identified many of the tactics on the Table.

The pilot study revealed that there is a need for privacy and quiet while doing the interviews. In particular, Participant A, the Lecturer at the School, was distinctly unforthcoming and reticent. This was not just because of the sensitivity of the research subject or his reluctance or inability to talk openly about matters that may be perceived as delicate, but also because of the lack of privacy and office space. Participant A had an open, shared office and this possibly cramped his style. Interviews needed to be conducted in quiet, private office space, to maximise their openness and reliability.

Furthermore, because of the sensitivity of the subject involved, the total confidentiality and anonymity of the interviews would need to be mentioned at the outset and it would need to be reiterated and emphasised that the interviewees will not be identifiable by description and that the data will be dealt with in such a manner that it will be impossible to identify its origins or authors.

The interviewees had a tendency to ramble and stray from the main focus of the interview, which is the specialised domain of upward communication. They often spoke of communication as a whole, and the importance of communication in general. Although common sense dictates that communication is indeed a holistic construct, the time constraints of the interviews meant it became necessary, with the

utmost discretion and tact, to tweak the trend of the interview back to its original hub and bring the interviewees back on track.

The interviews of the pilot study highlighted the problems of words that are indeterminate and that may be interpreted in an ambiguous manner. Two words were isolated that caused confusion in their meaning and perception; these words would therefore need to be put into an accurate context and explained in a precise manner. This would have to be done not just in the interviews but in the writing up of the main thesis, perhaps in a glossary or list of terminology in the Literature Review.

The words that turned out to be capable of double meaning are ‘critical’ and ‘feedback.’ The word ‘critical’ was used in the phrase ‘critical upward communication’ to mean upward communication that criticises or is at variance with an issue. The interviewees, particularly Participant A, sometimes understood ‘critical’ as ‘important/vital/significant.’ This caused a great deal of ambiguity and uncertainty.

Another word was ‘feedback’, which was used as another word for upward communication from the employee to the supervisor. The participants of the pilot study often responded with answers that implied the use of the word ‘feedback’ to mean a constructive critique from the superior to the subordinate or downward communication. In recognition of the need to be more precise about the words used in the thesis and in communicating with the interviewees it was decided to use the phrase ‘upward communication that is *critical* of’ rather than ‘critical upward communication’

The pilot study was also an opportunity to try out the new digital Sony tape recorder and the digital voice editing software that had been obtained specially for the purpose of recording and transcribing of the Ph.D interviews. The tape recorder was minute and no bigger than a cigarette lighter. It was, amusingly enough, an interesting conversation piece. All the three interviewees remarked enthusiastically about its size and neatness and this provided a pleasant start to the interview.

The interviews may be transferred from the tape recorder to the laptop through a USB cable. The software (Digital Voice Editor 2) with the Sony Digital Voice Recorder which is operated from the desktop through the mouse or touch pad can be made to go slower or faster. This makes the task of transcription comparatively straightforward.

Another piece of technology that came to the fore during the Pilot Study was the Qualitative Data Analysis Software package, MAXqda, which was chosen to analyse the data. The pilot study provided a chance to try out this software. After the pilot interviews were transcribed and run through MAXqda, it was realised that more time and effort was needed to mastering and becoming au fait with the any computer data analysis package to use it to its maximum potential. The MAXqda package was later discarded for the N6 qualitative software analysis package which was believed at the time to be much more sensitive and sophisticated and in tune with the quality of the analysis desired. Eventually, the N6 software was abandoned for the Framework analysis of Swallow et al., (2003), which is more conducive to interpretive analysis. *See Appendix 27: A Synopsis of the Pilot Interviews..*

3.3.4 Insights Gained

Carrying out the pilot study highlighted the aspects of the interview techniques and methodology that need to be adapted and revised.

The following is a summary of the insights derived from the pilot study that proved to be invaluable in planning the fieldwork:

1. The time spent in establishing the pilot study clarified the supplementary period of time and the extra thought needed to put aside to liaise with the 4 organisations chosen to accommodate the main research and arrange the interviews for the main body of research.
2. It became apparent that extra time and effort were needed to becoming au fait with the MAXqda data analysis package and possibly look at other quality data analysis software packages as alternatives to the MAXqda package.
3. Re-designing the interviews was critical. A realignment and compression of the original interview schedule was vital.
4. A visual prop in the form of a table of upward influence tactics and ingratiation techniques is useful to diffuse the sensitive nature of the subject and proves to be much more effective than eyeballing the interviewees and asking probing questions about impression management techniques.
5. Many of the responses from the interviews link directly to the themes of the Literature Review.
6. It was recognised that the interviews needed to be conducted in quiet, private office space, to maximise their consistency and reliability and ensure confidentiality.

Pilot studies, therefore, identify the potential problems that could arise in applying realistic and practical aspects of the research procedure, where the unfortunate tenets of Murphy's Law (supposedly a law of natural effects that postulates that things that can possibly go wrong do go wrong) could manifest themselves. The pilot study ensures that the anomalies and glitches that arise are corrected before the main study begins so that the methodology of the main thesis may proceed efficiently and effectively.

3.3.5 The Process Of Data Collection

3.3.5.1 Ladies Who Lunch.....

Four organisations within Scotland were identified, through the personal connections of the researcher and her Supervisors. The organisations are discussed in detail in the following sub-section. Four lunch meetings were organised to meet up with the CEOs and management representatives of these organisations. They were told about the scope and focus of the research and small overviews of the research, clearly set out in the non-academic vernacular, were given to them. Over a pleasant lunch, access to their organisations to conduct interviews was requested. *See Appendix 28: A Brief Overview of the Research.*

During the very agreeable ambiance of the lunch meetings with the representatives of the management of the four organisation identified, it was decided that the researcher would be allowed to conduct interviews in the organisations. Once access was established, negotiations needed to be had on the number and length of the interviews. For instance, the CEO of Organisation C, in particular, was adamant that

his organisation would only permit 15 very short interviews. However, as it so happened, because of the cordial relationship that was established with a manager of Organisation C, who was organising the interviews, over 30 interviews of about an hour each were eventually carried out. What was important at the initial stage was actually establishing that access to the organisations was going to be possible.

The fieldwork began in January, '05 and continued until October, '05. A total of 105 interviews was conducted during this space of time, in all the four organisations and through their different tiers of the organisational hierarchies. This was the sample of this study and this suits the approach of this research; data are gathered in sufficient quantity to be analysed and draw generalisations from. *See Appendix 28: The Original Timeline and Appendix 29: The Revised Timeline.*

3.3.5.2 The Interviews

During the course of the fieldwork, 105 interviews were carried out in the four organisations; 37 in Organisation B; 14 in Organisation P; 32 in Organisation C; and 22 in Organisation E. Interviews, therefore, form the empirical dimension of this research.

In all the four organisations, after access to the organisation had been agreed to by the Managing Director or CEO, the first point of contact was a manager of the organisation, who provided the organisational charts and suggested the number of participants desired and in which tiers of management. The timings for the interviews were also set and a small room was allocated in which to conduct the interviews. This primary data was based on convenience and snowball sampling and the observation

and analysis of data gathered during the course of a series of semi -structured interviews.

The initial interview orientation consisted of personal introductions and pleasantries, to establish the researcher's bona fides. After this, the research was briefly explained and the general purpose of the interview described. Assurances of confidentiality and subject anonymity were made; this was also stressed in writing in capital red letters at the top of the interview schedule, which was also given to the interviewee. A brief description of the trajectory of the interview was made and permission to record the interview was requested.

'The nature of the research question has direct implications for the choice of methodology employed' (Hussey and Hussey, 1997: 115). The majority of the interviews took place at the office premises of the respondents. The very nature of the thoroughly human and individual aspects of the research dictated a need to spend time with the subjects, gain their confidence and skilfully steer the direction of the interview to issues of interest. The informal, semi-structured interviews, designed to collect qualitative data to address the research question followed a list of issues as reflections of the themes highlighted by the desk research. Every effort was made to make the interviews as natural and relaxed as was possible.

The Table of upward influence tactics, (Appendix 34) made of a composite of upward influence behaviours, was introduced later in the course of the interview, after a certain level of empathy was established with the interviewee, to determine and

discuss the ingratiation and impression management techniques used in conveying upward communication. The presence of the table and very act of being able to point to and identify behaviours from the table helped to deflect the sensitive moment when the researcher began to probe the use of ingratiating behaviours that may be used when subordinates communicate with their supervisors within organisations. This helped to open the channels of communication to begin a conversation about which ingratiation and impression management tactics the interviewees had seen being used or used themselves.

Although silence is not, per se, an upward influence tactic or a feature of impression management or ingratiation theory, it is a significant aspect of upward communication in the modern literature (Morrison and Milliken, 2000; Milliken et al., 2003). As such, it formed part of the Table to invite reactions and responses on its use or not, from the participant.

The interviews were tape-recorded and personal notes were also made. The interviews were then transcribed and expanded notes were made. Furthermore, rough notes were made of the profiles of the respondents, based on their personalities, attitudes, personal value systems, beliefs, people skills, *savoir faire*, social skills and more importantly, their personal perceptions on upward communication. Interviews and transcripts were a useful and efficient, if somewhat time-consuming way of collecting data, but were nonetheless, found to be extremely effective and realistic in application. 'Contact sheets' to guide planning and serve as a basis for the data

analysis to come were also used (Miles and Huberman 1984) and contained information about:

- the people, events and general *ambience* ‘around’ the interviews.
- the main themes and issues that arose

The analysis of the data explored themes of the responses of the respondents using the constant comparative method (Silverman, 2000) and analytic induction (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). This was built ‘upon a cyclical or spiral perception of the research process, with concept development, data collection and data analysis taking place in close conjunction’ and ‘feeding into each other’, with the ultimate aim of unfolding the research ‘winding on and around itself until a clearer identification and understanding of the concepts of relevance is reached.’ (Blaxter, Hughes et al., 2001: 208). Triangulation or ‘convergent validation’ (Campbell and Fiske, 1959) was used to strengthen qualitative research findings by combining interview and commentary sources (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). Furthermore, original quotes from the interviews were used to add inflection, animation and authenticity to the analysis (Walkout 1990).

3.3.5.3 The Sample

A population, in research terminology, is ‘a well-defined group of people or objects that share common characteristics’ (Lunsford, 2002: 28). The sampling used by this study was theoretical, concerned with constructing a sample which is meaningful theoretically because it builds in certain characteristics or criteria which help to develop the research question (Mason, 1966).

The sample had two features, relevant to the research. Firstly, choosing cases in terms of the subject of the study from three levels, within the organisations, the senior management level, the mid-management level and the operational level. Secondly, the size of the original sample snowballed dramatically. As interest in the research spread by word of mouth through the organisation, friends of the originally selected interviewees volunteered to be interviewed because they wanted to express their viewpoints on upward communication within their organisation.

The respondents' names have not been used for reasons of confidentiality; they have been allocated numbers, letters and codes for the purpose of this study, in a random and *not* in an alphabetical order.

3.3.5.4 The Four Organisations

The sample was drawn from four organisations in Scotland, located in the Grampian area. The four organisations are of differing sizes and with totally different domains of activity.

- Organisation B was a large airport authority.
- Organisation P was a small oil company, which was recently acquired by a giant oil conglomerate, referred to, in the analysis, as the 'mother company'
- Organisation C was a large construction company
- Organisation E was a medium sized enterprise trust.

See Appendix 31: Detailed Information on the Four Organisations.

See Appendix 32: The First Interview Schedule.

See Appendix 33: The Revised Interview Questions.

See Appendix 34: A Table of Tactics Used by Employees While Communicating with Supervisors.

See Appendix 35: A Management Level Schedule

See Appendix 36: A Very Short Interview Schedule for Participants in a Rush.

3.3.6 Analysis /Findings

First of all, through the process of iteration, based on a review of the literature on upward communication, ingratiation theory and impression management, that was then correlated to the questions and responses in the 105 interviews conducted, the key themes of this study were identified, with their sub-themes. It was therefore decided to concentrate on these areas of research. These also run parallel to the original aims and objectives of the study, and this will be looked at again in the final chapter. The six thematic frameworks were formulated on six separate spreadsheets and the corresponding variables worked out. These were:

1. Spreadsheet 1: the variable of upward communication; its practical aspects, problems, filters and distortions about the manner in which the participants communicated with their superiors
2. Spreadsheet 2: the variable of employee silence within organisations and the importance of trust in upward communication
3. Spreadsheet 3: the variable of the use of ingratiation and impression management; the superiors' reaction to ingratiation; factors of ingratiation, reciprocity, tactics of ingratiation,
4. Spreadsheet 4: The variable of the relationship of the superior and the subordinate: who sets the tone for upward communication; the effects of

5. Spreadsheet 5: The variable of power, hierarchy and control; the effects of the organisational hierarchy on concepts of power and control
6. Spreadsheet 6: The variable of the effects of downsizing within the organisation on morale, which impacts directly on upward communication and possibly germinates organisation silence and the ingratiation and impression management tactics used. This variable was used specifically for Organisation B, where downsizing was taking place within the organisation.
7. Spreadsheet 7: The variable of the impact or otherwise of gender on upward communication
8. Spreadsheet 8: The variable of the influence of local culture on communication styles.

N6 analytic software was considered for use during analysis. However, the software proved to have severe limitations. In particular, it formed a synthetic screen between the author and the data, hindering the deep interpretive analysis that is the cornerstone of this methodological approach. When the first set of interviews were run through the software, the limitations of N6 became apparent and it was decided to abandon it in favour of the more traditional methods of analysis. In general, it can be argued that the most sophisticated data analysis mechanism is the human mind, and that this is particularly the case with interpretive methodological frameworks. Thus, data analysis software technology, however sensitive and sophisticated it might be, is not a substitute for intuitive and interpretive thought. Indeed, in terms of interpretivist

frameworks, it may be viewed as a solution to a problem that does not exist - or even a barricade to prevent the researcher from becoming immersed in the data. Therefore, the Framework Analysis (Swallow et al., 2002) was used as the base note for the analysis, on which the raw data was charted and tabulated on Excel sheets, before it was sifted and distilled through the process of interpretive analysis.

The Framework Analysis (Swallow et al., 2002) proved to be an improved base medium from which the interpretive analysis could be done. The raw data was categorised in detail into variables, organisations and levels within the hierarchy of each of the four companies, and individual quotes. The interviewees were then indexed: the participants were given codes, for example, B15-M-III-TM, which contained key information about them; which organisation they worked for, their place in the hierarchy of the organisation, their tenure with the organisation and their sex. The four companies have been disguised as Organisations B, C, E and P. The identity and the anonymity of the interviewees within the organisations have been protected. Each participant has been given a code, which defines their organisational status. For instance, Participant B15-M-III-TM, which may be interpreted thus:

- the first letter of the code denotes the organisation, B;
- the second number stands for their sequence in the interviews done in that organisation; for instance, B15, was the 15th interview conducted in Organisation B
- gender is signified by F or M – the analysis contains a brief discussion whether gender impacts on the style of communication.

- the third symbol after the hyphen, I, II or III, signifies the place of the interviewee in the hierarchy of the organisation: I stands for top management, II stands for middle management and III stands for operational
- the last symbol, TL, TM or TS, delineates the time the interviewee has spent in the organisation; T stands for ‘tenure.’ TL stands for ‘Tenure /Long’, a long employment period at the organisation, (10 years and over). TM or ‘Tenure/Medium’ would stand for a medium tenure of employment period at the organisation, (5 to 9 years) and TS would be Tenure /Short, a short tenure of employment at the organisation (1 to 4 years) – the analysis will contain references to where participants with a longer tenure within the organisation communicate and conduct themselves differently to those who have served a shorter or medium term of time.

This, therefore, means that, at the time the interview was conducted, Participant B15-M-III-TM:

- worked at Organisation B
- was the 15th interviewee within that organisation
- is a man
- worked as operational staff
- and was with the organisation for 10 years or more.

Several colour-coded Excel sheets were created and categorized, with the participants’ codes down the left hand column of the spreadsheet and variables in the top row. The opinions of the participants and personal notes from the interview were charted and transferred from the interview transcripts onto the Excel spreadsheets and

entered or indexed into the relevant cells. These were then printed out and worked on with coloured markers to organise and categorize the words of the participants.

Therefore, the essence of the original quotes of the participants and the personal notes from the researcher were organised and configured onto a thematically structured frame where they were easily visible and accessible for interpretive scrutiny, with the links, patterns or non-patterns in the data often almost leaping out at the researcher to analyse.

The intuitive process of interpretive analysis then commenced. The 105 interviews were analysed through the narrative/interpretive genre; this prompted the creation of stories ‘that are contextually and temporally bound. This perspective leads, not to certainties and truths, but to kaleidoscopic understandings’ (Barry and Elmes, 1997b: 847). Fisher (1984; 1985, 1987) coined the phrase, *narrative paradigm*, which is pertinent to this research, and which accommodates different narrative ways of categorizing reality – ‘people are portrayed as meditative, as well as calculative, thinkers who judge the reasoning in stories by how well the story hangs together and how fully it rings true with experience’ (de Cock, 1998: 3). Hummel (1991) explained that a story may be a commentary about an event or set of circumstances, as seen through the eyes of the storytellers; or as in the case of this research, the interviewees, who talk, subjectively, about their connection with the dynamics of upward communication in their organisations, and the different upward influence tactics they use or have seen being used and why.

In as much as this is so, these stories/interviews do not simply recount events; they are the outcomes of severe editing. The storytellers, the interviewees, shape and mould reality as they see it, to form sketches and anecdotes that connect facts and store complex situations in forms that their minds can make sense of (Weick and Browning, 1986, Gabriel, 1995). This makes them inventions rather than discoveries (Weick, 1995). The findings of the research were finally presented in a comprehensive manner as conclusions - the finalé, the 'allegro' or the 'presto' of the project (Silverman, 2000: 249) that 'closes the circle' and reviews the research findings within the context of the study objectives.

3.3.7 Communication Audits

Tourish and Hargie (2004: 142) argued that organisations are 'fundamentally systems for facilitating human interaction. How well people exchange information is often the most critical factor in determining whether a business lives or dies.' Furthermore, organizations have been described as systems for co-ordinating human interaction; feedback, in turn, is vital for the effective functioning of any organizational system (Downs, 1988, Downs and Adrian, 2004).

Information about the internal communications of the organisation can best be obtained through a communication audit. A communication audit has been defined as 'a comprehensive and thorough study of communication philosophy, concepts, structure, flow and practice within an organization' (Emmanuel, 1985: 50). The advantage of an audit is that it presents 'an objective picture of what is happening compared with what senior executives think (or have been told) is happening' (Hurst,

1991: 24). As Tourish and Hargie (2004: 133) said, ‘A communication audit sheds light on the often hazy reality of an organisation’s performance, and exposes problems and secrets to critical scrutiny. It enables managers to chart a clear course for improved performance.’ Various methods exist to achieve this end result (Goldhaber and Rogers, 1979; Downs and Adrian, 1997; Hargie and Tourish, 2000; Dickson et al., 2003; Hargie and Dickson, 2007). For instance, Hargie and Dickson (2007) recently evaluated the efficacy of Episodic Communication Channels in Organization (ECCO) audits and concluded that they provide ‘specific and valuable information about communication flow’ (Hargie and Dickson, 2007: 12).

This thesis, can, therefore, be viewed as a communication audit of four organisations, with a particular focus on the myriad and diverse forces and forms of upward communication.

3.4.1 Limitations And Ethical Issues

This section of the methodology proceeds to discuss the limitations of the methodology and the possible constraints of its approach. It concludes by discussing the ethical issues involved.

3.4.2 Limitations: Validity

Cresswell (1998) described validity as how accurately accounts represent the participants' realities of the social phenomena. Procedures for establishing validity include those strategies used by researchers to assert the credibility of their study (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983). Richardson (1994: 522) used the metaphor of a crystal as an image for validity: 'Crystals are prisms that reflect externalities and refract within themselves- what we see depends on our angle of repose.'

Multiple perspectives on qualitative validity have existed in the research literature (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Schwandt, 1997; Altheide and Johnson, 1994; Maxwell, 1992), which offers different terms for 'validity', such as 'authenticity', 'goodness', 'verisimilitude', 'adequacy', 'trustworthiness', 'plausibility', 'validation', and 'credibility.' Qualitative researchers, as with this study, need to demonstrate that their studies are credible. As Locke and Golden-Biddle (1997: 1026) have said, 'The meaning of contribution emerges not from the presentation of brute facts, but rather from the development of honest claims to convey knowledge intended for academic audiences.'

3.4.3 Lenses and Paradigm Assumptions

The research has been guided by the strictures of Cresswell (1998) who has advanced a framework that can help researchers identify appropriate validity procedures for their studies and further suggested that the choice of validity procedures is governed by two perspectives, firstly that the lens researchers choose to validate their studies and secondly, researchers' paradigm assumptions. The lens used by the researcher means that the inquirer uses a viewpoint or a perspective for establishing validity in a study. For example, in this study, one lens that determined the credibility of a study was the lens of the researcher. Researchers (and the management of organisations) need to determine how long to remain in the field, whether the data are saturated to establish good themes or categories, and how the analysis of the data evolves into a persuasive narrative. Patton (1980: 339) has described this process as one where qualitative analysts return to their data 'over and over again to see if the constructs, categories, explanations, and interpretations make sense.' Altheide and Johnson (1994: 489) have referred to it as 'validity-as-reflexive-accounting' where researchers, the topic, and the sense-making process interact.

Qualitative inquirers may use a second lens to establish the validity of their account: the participants in the study (Wolcott, 1994). The qualitative paradigm assumes that reality is socially constructed and it is what participants perceive it to be. This lens suggests the importance of checking how accurately participants' realities have been represented in the final account. Cresswell (1998) has suggested that those who employ this lens seek to actively involve participants in assessing whether the interpretations accurately represent them. However, due to the paucity of access, this

has not been possible in this research. The organisations made it clear that no recurrent visits would be possible to the organisation once the interviews were conducted and they opposed the interviews being verified by participants on the basis that this would interfere with their schedules and commitments. Furthermore, they were against their employees participating in a questionnaire that was planned to be sent out after the interviews.

In this research, it has been attempted to use the constructivist or interpretive position that emerged during the period of 1970 to 1987 (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994), to enhance the validity of this study. Constructivists believe in pluralistic, interpretive, open-ended, and contextualized (e.g., sensitive to place and situation) perspectives toward reality.

The critical perspective that emerged during the 1980s as the ‘crisis in representation’ Denzin and Lincoln, (1998: 9) maintained that researchers should uncover the hidden assumptions about how narrative accounts are constructed, read, and interpreted. This has been only partially possible in this study. What governs the researcher’s perspectives about narratives is her historical *situatedness* of inquiry, a *situatedness* based on social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic, and gender antecedents of the studied situations. Attempts have been made to be reflexive and be aware of what inferences and suppositions she has brought to the narratives. The validity of the study may not, therefore, be deemed to be totally pure; its assumptions might be interrogated and challenged.

3.4.4 Validity Procedures

Carspecken (1996) has established validity procedures for tracking bias and as ways for researchers to establish validity within the lenses. One such procedure is triangulation. This is a validity procedure where researchers search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study. The term comes from military navigation at sea where sailors triangulated among different distant points to determine their ship's bearing (Jick, 1979). As a validity procedure, triangulation is a step taken by researchers employing only the researcher's lens, and it is a systematic process of sorting through the data to find common themes or categories by eliminating overlapping areas. A popular practice is for qualitative inquirers to provide corroborating evidence collected through multiple methods, such as observations, interviews, and documents to locate major and minor themes. In the case of this study, the narrative account is valid because researchers go through this process and rely on multiple forms of evidence rather than a single incident or data point in the study.

However, Carspecken (1996) has advocated that another procedure to enhance validity is for researchers to self-disclose their assumptions, beliefs, and biases. This is the process whereby researchers consider and honestly scrutinize their personal beliefs, values, and biases that may shape their inquiry. This validity procedure uses the lens of the researcher but is clearly positioned within the critical paradigm where individuals reflect on the social, cultural, and historical forces that shape their interpretation. This has been seriously and honestly attempted by the researcher in the analysis.

Nevertheless, Carspecken (1998) and Moustakas (1994) have recommended creating a separate section in the thesis on the 'role of the researcher' to provide an epilogue, use interpretive commentary throughout the discussion of the findings, or bracket themselves out by describing personal experiences as used in phenomenological methods. However, the constraints of space worked against doing this.

Then again, Cresswell (1998) has advocated 'member checking' as another measure towards establishing validity. The validity procedure thus shifts from the researcher to participants in the study. Lincoln and Guba (1998: 314) describe member checks as 'the most crucial technique for establishing credibility' in the study. It consists of taking data and interpretations back to the participants in the study so that they can confirm the credibility of the information and narrative account. Unfortunately, the management of the four organisations did not permit member checking.

Another recommendation from Cresswell (1998) towards validity is for researchers to stay at the research site, the organisations for a prolonged period of time. Fetterman (1989: 46) contends that 'working with people day in and day out for long periods of time is what gives ethnographic research its validity and vitality.' This involves repeated observation and interaction, the slow process of building trust with the participants, finding organisational gatekeepers to allow access to people and sites and establishing a special rapport so that participants are comfortable disclosing deep insights and personal information. Again, as much as this could have been supremely

beneficial towards establishing validity, the constraints of time and organisational access did not permit this.

Another procedure for establishing credibility in a study is to describe the setting, the participants, and the themes of a qualitative study in rich detail. According to Denzin (1994: 83), ‘thick descriptions are deep, dense, detailed accounts. Thin descriptions, by contrast, lack detail, and simply report facts...The purpose of a thick description is that it creates verisimilitude, statements that produce for the readers the feeling that they have experienced the events being described in the study.’ Thus, credibility is established through the lens of readers who read a narrative account and are transported into a setting or situation.

To use this procedure for establishing credibility, researchers employ a constructivist perspective to contextualize the people or sites studied. The process of writing using thick description is to provide as much detail as possible. It may involve describing a small slice of interaction, experience, or action; locating individuals in specific situations; bringing a relationship or an interaction alive between two or more persons; or providing a detailed rendering of how people feel (Denzin, 1994).

With this vivid detail, the researchers help readers understand that the account is credible. The researcher has attempted to use the utmost possible detail in her study. However, this recommendation by Cresswell (1998) was also curtailed by the constraints of time and a prescribed academic limitation on the size of the thesis. It is

however, hoped that a high degree of validity has nonetheless been achieved in this study, despite the constraints within which the researcher needed to function.

3.4.5 Objectivity Or The Personal Perspective?

The acknowledgement of ideals such as openness for various interpretations and representations, sensitivity to the complexity of language use, and political awareness, motivate a non-authoritative form of research and writing. Rather than the researcher providing authoritative, perfectly objective research results, the research approach has attempted to be clear about the complex and uncertain nature of the project and how ‘results’ are dependant on the researcher’s more or less conscious preferences and perceptions within a particular political and linguistic orientation. While the researcher is mindful of the fact that not imposing one’s own deep seated, inborn perspectives on the fabric of the research is important, this may not be humanly possible in an absolute sense. Central to this is the ‘diological character of rationality’, and the ‘situated, embodied, practical-moral knowledge it involves’ (Schotter and Gergen, 1989: 27). Alvesson and Deetz (2001: 135) has suggested that ‘these knowledges are accountable to an audience’ rather than ‘provable within a formal system.’

Furthermore, Alvesson and Deetz (2001: 135) have suggested that instead of using the common realistic or objectivist style, a more personal style may be used. Through making it clear that it is not an objective picture of reality, but a set of impressions and interpretations produced by a situated person, and characterised by feelings, imagination, commitments, the reader is reminded that what is offered is a story – at

best empirically sensitive and well-grounded and full of insights and theoretical contributions, but still open to other readings, and fed by other perspectives. Interview statements and observations have therefore been selectively presented by the researcher to the reader, who is taken by the researcher through the story. Such an approach is called a 'reflexive methodology' (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000). Reflexive methodology does not call for the following of specific procedures or techniques and tends to give priority to the data as the cornerstone of research work. However, reflexive methodology stresses 'the constructed and contestable nature of empirical material and calls for another balance between emphasis on the empirical material and meta-interpretations of the research work' (Alvesson and Skoldberg, 2000: 136).

The researcher has kept this in mind and has attempted to reach a fine degree of sophistication in how to relate to such empirical material. This

'reduces the risk of clumsy, commonsensical and naïve ways of treating the material - for example viewing it as mirrors of reality - and increases the chance of using it for more creative purposes in terms of producing theoretically interesting results....This would tend to downplay the role of the empirical material as the judge of 'objective reality'' (Alvesson and Deetz, 2001: 135).

3.4.6 The Element Of Ethics

This study covers a facet of communication research, which is a form of social science that has special social concerns. The fundamental nature of communication implies a basic ethical foundation that stems 'from a judgement of the value of the *other person* (Bostrum, 2004: 258). It implies a fundamentally cooperative attitude as a basic prerequisite for the communicative act. Lieberman and Arndt (2004: 256)

maintained, that the evolution of speech and communication is tied into selfless motives and are ‘other-oriented or self oriented.’

However this research on upward communication in organisations studies subtle, indefinite fibres within the dynamics of communication such as the brief, almost subliminal cost benefit scrutiny that can occur in communications between the subordinate and the supervisor, and the use of impression management and ingratiation whilst doing so. These are sensitive issues to investigate and analyse. Cautious and furtive confidences are often revealed by the respondents during the course of the interview, which need to be respected by being fiercely shielded by anonymity and confidentiality. To assure anonymity, the real names of the participants are not used. Moreover, the data that results needs to be handled with objectivity and not tainted with personal bias. The study needs to be approached without any preconceived notions on the part of the researcher. This is challenging. During the course of the interviews, empathy often develops between the interviewee and the interviewer. On one hand, this can lead to rich data being collected. On the other, it might, albeit ingenuously, tinge and possibly taint the analysis with the personal perspectives of the researcher. Thus this process of gathering and distilling the data has strong ethical overtones.

3.4.7 Informed Consent

It is a fundamental principle of research ethics that human beings should be involved in research only if they have given their informed consent (Katz, 1998, 2004; Rosoff, 1999). Informed consent is a key provision of the major codes of ethics for research

involving human subjects such as the Nuremberg Code, the code of the World Medical Association, and the American Psychological Association code of ethics (Beecher, 1966, 1970). There are two justifications for the requirement of informed consent. First, informed consent protects subjects' welfare and helps protect subjects both from unscrupulous researchers who may expose them to patently unacceptable risks and from well-meaning researchers who believe in good faith that the risks of their research should be acceptable but whose values or perspectives in this regard differ from those of the subjects (Capron and Banowski, 1991, Capron and Katz, 2002). And second, justification for informed consent is that it protects subjects' autonomy or ability to exercise self-determination. *See Appendix 37: Ethics in this Research.*

A 'difficulty in the study.... of organizational communication is that ethics has been relegated to a subsidiary topic, with a host of other issues predominating' (Hargie *et al.*, 2004: 412). However, long before the concept of research-ethics became de rigueur, qualitative researchers were conscious of the ethical implications of their work. William Foote Whyte's *Street Corner Society*, first published in 1943, contains an extended discussion about research ethics.

Even though the definition of ethical conduct of research is a normative undertaking, the application of normative ethical principles often depends on untested empirical assumptions. For example, the ability of research participants to give truly informed

consent depends on many factors that cognitive, personality, clinical, or social psychologists can examine empirically.

Sigmon and Rohan et al., (1997) and Melton et al., (1996) argued it becomes obvious that the ability of participants to give informed consent may not necessarily depend on their age or level of intellectual sophistication, for example, but on how the information is presented.

As such, what the researcher kept the following issues in mind to conduct this research:

1. being mindful of and respecting the perspectives, expectations, concerns, and beliefs about the study, of the research participants,
2. communicating with participants about the research in terms that they understand, in uncomplicated, non-academic language,
3. respecting the privacies and confidentialities that are important to the participants,
4. conducting the most valid research possible, at the least risk to the participants,
5. being aware of the foibles of one's own perspectives, viewpoints and attitudes that might impact on the interview or interviewee or interpretation of the data.

Linked to these issues are the temporal and spatial considerations of the ever changing and dynamic context of the proposed research - the mores, personal value systems, cultures and personal thrust and drive of the researcher and the participants. Moreover, what a researcher must know in order to conduct ethical research on

human beings in an organizational setting needs to take into account the perspectives of the research participants, their expectations, concerns, and beliefs about the research and how it is imperative to respect those privacies that are important to the participants. These are empirical subjects regarding fundamental issues about beliefs and attitudes, communication and comprehension, personal concerns regarding control of information and exposure of self:

‘Being acutely aware of these ethical matters enables investigators to conduct research ethically. In turn, ethical research leads to the ability, in most instances, to obtain valid results, the necessary cooperation of research participants, and the societal support needed to sustain knowledge and science’ (Melton *et al.*, 1996: 200).

As far as this research is concerned, the ethical significance of the proposed communication audits was also observed. Issues considered included confidentiality, how widely the results will be circulated and the time commitment required of the audit respondents. Participants were needed to be assured that their responses would be treated confidentially. Moreover, they were, as far as is possible, be selected randomly, to ‘reinforce the message that the aim of the exercise is not to single people out with a view to imposing sanctions.’ (Hargie and Tourish, 2000: 31)

Alvesson and Deetz (2001: 196) emphasized that reassuring interviewees about anonymity, is ‘trivial, and yet vital.’ One may do it several times and stress the reasons for why the interviewees should believe the researcher, research ethics, his or her self-interest. Tapes may be a source of concern. If the researcher uses a tape-recorder, he or she may offer to switch it off during specific parts of the interview. He or she may also offer to refrain from directly using certain pieces of information,

assuming that this may encourage the interviewee to talk more openly. This was often done by the researcher during the course of the interviews.

3.4.8 Conclusion

The demands of time and space proved to be serious constraints in being able to conduct the research in greater depth. There remain areas, particularly within the nuances of ingratiation theory used in upward communication and the influence of the leadership of the organisation on communication styles that have yet to be explored, and which will, hopefully, form a basis for further research in the future.

The mainly qualitative methodology that was used is ideal for achieving depth of information, rich data and authentic descriptions of themes, values, perceptions and attitudes. The Professionalism Committee on the Qualitative Research Consultant's Association (2000) has speculated that the candour and clarity evoked by the use of this method can create new rationales and identify phenomena that might have been overlooked by previous research. As such, the methodology used was the most suitable and practicable to achieve the aims and objectives of this study.

CHAPTER 4

4. THE ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

“The adventures now”, said the Gryphon in an impatient tone: “explanations take such a dreadful time.”

(Lewis Carroll 1865/1982: 95)

The aim of this interpretive analysis is to distil what sense and significance may be made of the organisational stories and narratives that emerged in the 105 interviews conducted, the essence of which have been classed into the relevant variables. Firstly, this is done in a series of four analytical snapshots, examining the climate of the four organisations across the board. Secondly, this is followed by a detailed interwoven study of the data, categorised into appropriate variables, as identified and discussed in Chapter 3.3.6.

Throughout this chapter, the present tense will be used to accord consistency with the tenses used by the interviewees.

Before the analytical snapshots, the study makes an assessment of the interpretive paradigm, the zeitgeist behind this analysis. Van Maanen (1996: 378) maintains, ‘To claim that the researcher somehow explores the real world directly, without mediation of language, and then represents, mirrors, or translates that world into a precise word picture is today unthinkable.’ The idea that language has a role in the constitution of

reality has gained predominance primarily as a result of work in social construction and natural language philosophy (Phillips and Hardy, 1997). This idea emphasises that narratives, such as the interviewees' accounts, create ways of understanding the world; they do not mirror reality (Rorty, 1980). Indeed, the same narrative may be interpreted in a myriad different ways and 'different readers can potentially unlock different narratives from the same text' (de Cock, 1998: 14).

Furthermore, Boje (1991: 1001) explains, 'Organizations cannot be registered as one story, but instead are a multiplicity, a plurality of stories and story interpretations in struggle with one another... More important, organizational life is more indeterminate, more differentiated, more chaotic, than it is simple, systematic, monological, and hierarchical.' Moreover, if organisations are indeed, webs of meaning (Geertz, 1973) then no one can stand outside those webs. As a result, the researcher, like the interviewee, becomes a storyteller too, as is evident in the analytical snapshots of the organisations.

There is, of course, a danger with interpretivist approaches of what has been described as 'a descent into discourse' (Harvey, 1996: 85), characterized by what O'Doherty and Willmott have critiqued as infinite regress and reflexive solipsism (O'Doherty and Willmott, 2001). The issue starkly posed is: what is reality, and how can we understand it separate and apart from our linguistic characterizations of its core 'essence' (Reed, 2000, 2005; Contu and Willmott, 2005), without straying into a world in which there is no solid truth, but only rival interpretations of an ethereal, shifting social world? This research responds that the core challenge for interpretivist

research is to resist the search for the true 'essence' of a given phenomenon, but to utilize the accounts obtained from organisational actors to probe for the internal contradictions, intended meanings and implied meanings common to all forms of discourse.

Furthermore, the traditional view of organization assumes that communication consists of an exchange of information in and out of an organization. Organizational structure is conceived to be unidimensional and fixed, and for this reason it is thought to be amenable to managerial design. In the communication perspective, developed by Saluadez and Taylor (2006: 37) by contrast, organization is conceptualized as 'grounded in a social process of interpretation... Organization is created and recreated... in and through the everyday sensemaking activities of its members.'

Moreover, as de Cock (1998: 5) remarked, 'Representation is ultimately always self-presentation... Even when others speak, when we talk about or for them, we are taking over their voice.' Therefore, no matter how austerely and objectively the interviews are interpreted, they will remain human interpretations of the dynamics of upward communication within organisational worlds, shaped by the human personality and understanding of the researcher and the participants (Weick and Browning, 1986, Czarniawska, 1997).

Accordingly, from the point of view of the researcher, 'It thus becomes difficult to conceive of any possibility of an "accurate" or even an "impartial" representation of "organisational reality...In the very act of constructing data out of experience, the

researcher singles out some things as worthy of note and relegates others to the background ... sometimes referred to as “immaculate perception” (de Cock, 1998: 3). This interpretive analysis, therefore, will be *mélange* of the interpretation and mini-stories by the interviewees, articulating significant segments of the original discourse, secondary data from the literature review and the interpretations and insights of the researcher.

4.1.2. Analytical Snapshots of the Distinctive Climates of the Four Organisations

To set the timbre for the analysis, this study proceeds to describe and illustrate the climate of the four organisations at the time the research was conducted, as snapshots in time. Reichers and Schneider (1990: 22) defines organisational climate as ‘the shared perception of the way things are around here’, a definition broadly endorsed in the literature (Poole and Rousseau, 1988). Mathisen and Einarsen (2004) emphasize the importance of shared perceptions of the organisation as the basis of the notion of its climate. Each of the four organisations has different upward communication dynamics and distinct climates, which are discussed in detail after the following descriptions:

- Organisation B is a very successful, large airport organisation, where the Managing Director has just launched an array of new internal communication strategies to energize its employees. This is complicated by the fact that downsizing is taking place within the company, despite its enormous success, which results in many of its employees feeling apprehensive and anxious.
- Organisation C is a small company, and enjoys an extraordinarily comfortable climate, with satisfied, contented employees. It is however, possible, that the ‘family firm’ characteristics enjoyed by this company might evolve and change in the future, with the retirement of the very respected Managing Director and the progressive expansion of the company.
- Organisation E is an enterprise trust. It was born of the convergence of five other enterprise trusts and has a very pronounced hierarchy. At the helm, is a

compelling and controlling CEO, who is dismayed by the findings of a recent internal communication audit he had commissioned and faces the need for more open channels of communication within the organisation.

- Organisation P is a very prosperous, innovative oil company, which has recently been acquired by a huge oil conglomerate. Nevertheless, it remains self-determining. It has its own distinct style of direct and open upward communication; some of the older members of the organisation who have worked with each other for many long years have come to enjoy an ease of familiar understanding and interaction with their superiors. On the other hand, the organisation has many brilliant, new engineers, who are possessive of the ownership of their technological process and prefer to work in creative isolation.

This chapter will now proceed to expand these brief, introductory descriptions.

4.1.2.1 A Snapshot of Organisation B

Important new communication initiatives were recently launched in this large, successful airport organisation by the dynamic new Managing Director. A survey had been conducted and it was discovered that employees were not satisfied with the existing communication dynamics. A many pronged, ambitious and all encompassing communication strategy was launched forthwith; this was pronounced extremely successful by the senior management team. A survey was conducted in 2004, which appeared to support this contention. As the Communication manager [B1-F-I-TS] insisted,

‘The strengths of the organisation are a robust communications infrastructure ...written, electronic, face to face..., a commitment to good communication, a high level of face to face communication time between teams’

However, it was commonly believed within the workforce that these results were not accurately portrayed; Participant B4-M-III-TL explained,

‘The problem I have with this survey they [management] did last year... They said it was 75% who said they were happy with their job and 73% preferred to remain silent. Yes, but if you are happy you would speak up, wouldn’t you? I think the answers were cherry-picked...’

However, another insight into the formation of the communication strategy came from the very outspoken Human Relations manager, Participant B14-F-I-TM,

‘To be honest, we were making this up as we went along. It was just an idea at first. We thought that because we were doing so much work with communication that’s what made us think ...well, this is just not right; we should be using the staff to tell us what’s going to work. So we really made up as we went along. For us that’s the upward communication bit done...’

There were mixed reactions to the communication initiatives from the members of the organisation. Some favourable opinions were expressed in appreciation of the new communication endeavours. Participant B30-M-III-TL said:

‘He’s [the Managing Director] worked to make a big difference. Communication is open to everyone whether it be off the intranet or on notice boards or email...So there’s been a big difference in the past year or 18 months.’

Perspectives differed radically; the Financial Manager, B8-M-I-TL, confided,

‘I don’t think [the communication initiatives] are happening. The numbers are being made up. I talk to people and they don’t seem to know what’s going on. I think there’s some lies happening. And [the Managing Director] thinks it’s working but that’s not what I hear...’

On the other hand, the Communications Manager explained,

‘We even have a suggestion scheme now...people said they wanted more recognition and to be able to make suggestions. You can say what you want to suggest to improve things and you get a £5 retail voucher. Is that bribing them?! Well, we’ve had about 80 suggestions so far.’

It was intriguing to the researcher that on the same subject, Participant B5-M-III-TM, a young security guard said,

‘There’s an internet page where you can put in ideas and I have put up quite a few suggestions and I have more ... and you do get a token reward of a £5 voucher. I do it because it’s good for my CV if I want to progress upwards... don’t you think?’

The Customer Services Manager of the organisation was, however, very frank and open about his views and said,

‘My personal view is that we are forcing people to sit down and do communication. But is that right? Aren’t we a democracy or is that being forceful, telling people this is the way it is? I don’t fully subscribe to forcing or putting pressure on people to come in to these new communication initiative meetings and workshop. You just have to leave it open. It can be very emotional for them, a bit dictatorial. I know some are finding it so...’

This was reflected in the words of Participants B27-F-II-TM and B20-M-III-TM:

‘We now have too many communication forums... There are so many. This has opened things up so much. But perhaps it is a bit of overkill.’

‘I think the new communication strategy is very good. There are lots of different channels we can use but I still think it will be a continuous battle.’

Members of the fire brigade of Organisation B were much more outspoken,

‘We [the firemen], don’t hesitate to speak up. But I don’t believe the Managing Director bothers to listen to anyone... unless it is something he wants to hear.’ [B28-M-III-TM]

‘It all a façade... (the new communication strategy).’ [B32-F-III-TL]

See Appendix 38: Comments from the 2004 Survey, which prompted the Communication Strategy, 2005.

See Appendix 39: Excerpts from the Communications Strategy, 2005, That Followed the Survey, 2004.

See Appendix 40: Slides from the Management Presentation in March 2000.

In 2005, however, downsizing had begun within the organisation, despite the company being extremely profitable. The morale of the employees within the organisation was low; they were anxious, frightened and insecure. This impacted on the manner in which they communicated with their superiors (Appelbaum et al., 1992). While it is possible that the many communication initiatives launched by the Managing Director of the organisation could eventually have positive results, the immediate gains were seen to be negated by the sour and distrustful note that had contaminated the relationship between management and its employees, caused by the downsizing in the organisation. Furthermore, the issue of downsizing was not mentioned in any of the communication initiatives.

As a young employee in security [B5-M-III-TM], said,

‘Certainly with me, I would be a bit apprehensive about speaking up and rocking the boat. Unfortunately, that’s how society is – you have to look after number one - yourself.’

Furthermore, speaking about the grim, cynical tone that lay behind organisation morale, another employee confided,

‘Morale’s very low, we are scared... Did you know they have even done cuts in the finance department?’

The downsizing that was going on in the organisation was obviously a sensitive uncomfortable issue; during the first few interviews, employees did not mention the downsizing but were extremely wary and guarded as they talked to the researcher. It was only when the downsizing came to light during the course of the third interview, and the researcher began probing how the interviewees and their peers might be affected by it, that their feelings of insecurity, confusion and fear were expressed openly. Most employees were cautious, circumspect, mistrustful and guarded in their communications with their superiors. This resulted in two parallel upward communication kinetics; first, amplified ingratiation and impression management behaviour from employees as they communicated with their superiors to tell them what they thought they would like to hear, and so evince great faith in their strategies and communication initiatives, and second, a thick mist of employee silence, born of cynicism and insecurity.

Participant B20-M-III-TM said,

‘The people whose departments [are being downsized] are being affected right now.... They have lost interest which is understandable. It’s difficult. This used to be a place where you had a job for life and it’s not now. Everyone wonders when their day will come... I too always wonder if my role will be

required any more. This affects how people communicate; they'd be more guarded and cautious....Just say what the boss wants to hear.. Maybe even just stay quiet... Some very good people have gone'

However, it needs to be recorded, that the Managing Director of Organisation B was extremely successful in increasing company profits. As one of his employees said,

'I guess, at the end of the day the Managing Director has been told to do a certain job and the airport is making great profits, so he is doing his job. Since he got here the airport passenger rise is much increased, facilities for passengers are amazing now and it is going to be open for 24 hours, which means even more passengers.'

The issue of downsizing in Organisation B will be discussed in detail in Section 7 of this chapter, which also contains a short discussion on the merits or otherwise of the economic theory of the firm (Friedman, 1976) and the feasibility of the humanistic organisation (Larkin, 1986).

4.1.2.2 A Snapshot of Organisation C

Organisation C is a construction company. It must be noted that not one of the 32 people interviewed thought that there was any problem with internal communication within the company. In fact, they all endorsed the view that upward communication in the company flowed openly, without any filters or hindrances. The following words are representative of the communication ambience:

‘Oh yes. I express myself whatever ... No problem there. I try to be approachable too for my staff... I know some companies do... (have internal communication problems) but we certainly don’t have that problem....It’s a small company, more like a family outfit. Everyone speaks to everyone and there aren’t any problems. Even (the Managing Director) is very approachable too. It’s very open. I am very happy here’ [C14-M-II-TL].

‘The turnover of the staff is very low now – people stay here. Communication is very natural and open’ [C2-M-I-TL]

An important feature of this company is the iconic reputation and perception of the Managing Director, who is a greatly revered figure, with a democratic, participative style of leadership. He compared the forces that held together the management and the members of the organisation to those that exist within a marriage, with trust and amity, ‘It’s a commitment, like marriage...It’s all about commitment.’

Unlike Organisation B, this organisation had no flashy communication initiatives or communication workshops for their employees. Upward communication was open and honest; there were no filters or distortions and no apparent ingratiation and impression management tactics in evidence. This was because the tenor of upward communication was based on the sound quality of the relationship between

management and their employees. In turn, this was constructed on the tenets of commitment, honesty, decency and goodwill, which are endemic in the climate of Organisation C and which, as the employees were keen to point out to the researcher, are rooted in the culture of North East Scotland and Presbyterian ethics. The impact of culture on climate will be discussed in greater detail later in the analysis in Section 8.

Furthermore, the visibility and proximity of the Managing Director, coupled with the easy flow of upward communication, results in there being no prerequisite for the use of ingratiation or impression management tactics except for a moderate amount of silence, used not as ominous or mute protest, but as an expression of accord. In fact, the climate of this organisation is a setting for the expression of balanced and open employee voice. This is believed by the researcher to be a thoroughly natural consequence, born of a desire for consensus, and not because of any fear of retaliation.

Consensus and conformity are important in this company; the board of directors work hard to rationalise and resolve its deliberations in a unanimous consensus (not a majority vote) and similarly, this unusual syndrome is reflected in the fact that the employees:

‘...would think of expressing it (a criticism) ... but you would have to know if your idea fits in with the culture or not’ [Participant C20-M-II-TL].

As one of the directors explained,

‘[The Managing Director] has some pretty strong opinions and ways of dealing with things. But he doesn’t get things all his own way by any means.

Our board decisions are always by consensus. If someone is not happy it won't go ahead. We have never put things to the vote. So decisions are always by consensus. We will argue it out' [C8-M-I-TL].

As another director of the company explained:

'Yes, decisions at board level are done by consensus - not by voting. At the end of the day we always come to an agreement after talking it out. We will talk about things for quite a while. A lot is done outside the board meeting as well. Sometimes there are smaller disagreements, but at the end of the day we always come to an agreement' [C7-M-I-TL].

Many respondents had a long period of employment with the organisation: they stayed because they were happy and content, working conditions were good and pleasant and they felt they were valued and treated well. This in turn reinforced the open and natural flow of upward communication within the organisation. A big wooden board embellished in gold leaf, decorates the main wall of the reception area of the organisation. Many stories abound around this board, which is a list of all the names of the employees who have been with the company for over 25 years. The record is long and still growing.

Although Organisation C was not a family business per se, it enjoyed the characteristics of a family business. Communication in family businesses is characterised by openness and honesty (Stepek, Scottish Family Business Association, 2007; Donckels and Fröhlich, 1991; Donckels, 1991). As Participant C3-M-I-TL said, 'Communication here is so open.' Research has shown that employees are usually very happy within the family business; there are no grey areas, no unspoken anomalies (Stepek, Scottish Family Business Association, 2007). These characteristics of the family business are evident in Organisation C and are reflected

in the smooth and open flow of upward communication. As Participant C3-M-I-TM said,

‘Yes, I have no problems going to speak to anyone in the company whoever they are. Speaking to the managing director is so easy compared to other companies I have worked for. I don’t always tell him what he wants to hear of course....Yes, he doesn’t always listen but I will tell him what I think.’

This can be directly contrasted to the dynamic of upward communication in Organisation B, despite their new communication initiatives:

‘Personally I don’t think [the Managing Director] listens to people, well, even with the [new communication workshops] he does listen if he gets the answer he wants, otherwise he doesn’t...’ [B28-M-III-TM]

It becomes apparent, that more often than not, open upward communication does not arise from the creation of formal communication initiatives and policies, however attractively they are presented, but from the glue born of social capital, that binds people within the organisation. These are relationships made up of genuine regard, created by the passage of time and the employees’ favourable perception of the leader’s sense of fairplay and goodwill.

Anderson and Reeb (2003) maintained that the fundamental values in family businesses are largely determined by myths and legends centred around certain reference figures in the company history, people who have attained mythological status due to their pioneering achievements for the company. In the case of Organisation C, this would be the four founders of the organisation, only one of whom is active today, the present Managing Director. He is, from the perspective of

the employees, a living legend, and 'is usually talked about as the one 'we have to thank for all this', the one who 'started it all'' (Roessl, 2005: 206)

However, people in Organisation C are aware of possible changes ahead in the climate for the organisation with pending retirement of the Managing Director. There is a perceptible fear of new faces and new methods of doing things. As Participant C12-M-II-TM, the son of the managing director said,

'As a company, I think my father and all of the senior management have worked hard to foster a family feeling. The problem now is that the company is growing and it's harder to maintain....As the company has grown there is almost an additional level of management been created and I think some people feel forgotten about now...'

Another manager said,

'Yes, the company has changed drastically since I have been here. I just get on with my job and try not to get involved in company politics... It is certainly not the company it started out as back in the 80s. There are hassles in the job now definitely but that's a sign of the times' [C9-M-II-TL].

This is endorsed by another director of the company,

The old chairman is on the verge of retiring and X may be taking over as managing director...But that is just a sign of the times. We have to be a bit more business-like. They could afford to be a bit more paternal in the past but there isn't as much room for that now. We have to look at ways to be more streamlined as they say... But compared to other companies it's much friendlier although it has changed over the years but that's the way it has to be I think to stay ahead of the game. You have to be more hard-headed [C3-M-I-TM].

It was also evident that there was a mild distrust and scepticism of the new director who is likely to be made the new Managing Director. His new approach to business was found to be hard to accept. Many employees also felt that the son of the Managing Director should succeed him, to ensure a continuation of the

communication climate they have become accustomed to. There was also a growing realisation that the organisational climate and structure were changing with the employment of new people, which could result in their present degree of communicational comfort being compromised. As Participant C28-F-III-TL said,

‘In the last couple of years things haven’t perhaps been as good for communication - as we have different people now, new people from outside... They have different ways sometimes....’

Would the transformation of the family company to a bigger company create more layers in management, encourage a difference communication style or could the new power differentials that might evolve disturb their open and honest style of upward communication? There was a mild feeling of concern in the air;

‘The old directors are due to retire in the next couple of years and everyone is apprehensive about what will happen then. There is more talking among the lower ranks about the bosses and complaining about stuff. Before someone would sort the problem out but it lasts longer now. People don’t feel they can broach the subjects as easily now... The four directors are due to retire in the next couple of years and everyone is very apprehensive about what will happen then’ [C25-F-III-TL].

Harvey and Evans (1994) has argued that the influence of the founding family on the basic tenets and culture of the company may be unparalleled in family businesses. However, when the family business progresses to another stage of development, conflict may arise. Michaud (2000) asserted that effective communication is the key to resolving most family business problems, particularly in matters relating to who takes the company over when the current leader retires. The straightforward communication ambience that Organisation C enjoys, will, undoubtedly support and guide it through the possible changes ahead.

4.1.2.3 A Snapshot of Organisation E

First and foremost, it needs to be noted that quite a few interviewees in this organisation were genuinely worried and wary about answering the researcher's questions. They confided to the researcher, that despite the reassurances of confidentiality, they feared that what they said might be traced back to them and that some kind of retaliation might result – their CEO had been an academic in the past and was reputed to possess an awesome sense of inference and deduction. Therefore, the tone of many of their interviews was guarded, synthetic and muted. The researcher believes that this wariness sprang from a genuine feeling of apprehension: quite a few employees were reluctant to talk openly because they felt that the CEO and the management team would be able to track their data down and any negative comments might lead to retaliation. Ettore (1997) has pointed out that employees generally will not speak their minds if they fear that management will be able to identify them. Furthermore, quite a few participants were keen to finish the interview quickly; the researcher often got the impression that there was a certain amount of pretence involved in the manner they wanted to maintain the façade that the organisation was a good place to work in. As Participant E18-F-II-TM said,

‘It is a great organisation to work for. No problems... Great stuff... No problems at all...

The following interview extract illustrates the point better:

‘Is this interview anonymous and confidential? (E2-F-I-TM)

‘Yes, it is, absolutely And it will be presented in such a way as it can't be traced back to the interviewee.’ (Researcher)

‘But I bet it could be... Yes, I am quite sure he [the CEO] will recognize the people if he gets his hands on it, they [the CEO and Operations Director] will come to know’ (E2-F-I-TM).

Participant E10-F-II-TM asked,

‘Is this totally confidential? No one will come to know?’

As another employee, Participant E8-F-II-TM anxiously queried,

‘Are you absolutely sure that this is anonymous and confidential? It won’t get back to him [CEO]?’

The CEO in question is an outspoken, earnest, brilliant man, perhaps somewhat lacking in sensitive, interpersonal skills. Democratic leadership would not seem to be his preferred style. His approach is consistent with Peters and Waterman’s (1982) advocacy of strong corporate cultures – an advocacy that, as Willmott (1993; 2003) argues, can be construed as leading to a mono-cultural environment which is inimical to the expression of dissent. The CEO frankly admits,

‘As I am pretty forceful – I have clear views of what is right and wrong. Someone has to be in charge and take the decisions. I am not interested in self-management. Ultimately it all comes back to me. I know the cultures and values we subscribe to here and, if you don’t believe in them, this isn’t the place for you. Being good at your job is only part of the issue. You have to buy into the organisation.’

And yet, it is this perceived authoritarian streak that intimidates employees and hinders them from communicating with him openly, a syndrome that disturbed him deeply. Indeed, the CEO’s ethos of management was occasionally echoed by another member of the management team, Participant E13-M-II-TL, who said that,

‘A democratic style of leadership or management will encourage a whinging culture, I think...’

An older employee of the company said wryly,

‘There’s an analogy I have heard several times from the management – you both get on the bus and enjoy the ride, or you get off. It’s your choice....’

As Participant E21-F-II-TS confided,

‘We get a lot of that [top down communication]. I and some people I know are reluctant [to go talk to the CEO]. And there are some who are quite sceptical about this new communications forum.’

However, the CEO of Organisation E is vaguely aware that his authoritarian image might be daunting to his employees,

‘I am quite strong and consider myself to be open and easy-going but a lot of people say they find me a bit intimidating. So maybe that might stop them coming to me with a negative point...’

As the Communication Manager [E2-F-I-TM] said,

‘I think if you have a critical opinion you can voice it but only through the right channels. [The CEO] doesn’t like to think people wouldn’t speak to him if they had something to say.’

Almost as if to console themselves about the dismal quality of upward communication, the directors and staff at Organisation E found reassurance in comparing communication within their organisation to that of other organisations they had known. The Operations Director said,

‘Coming from a public sector background I feel very lucky to work in an organisation that is as open as this. I am irritated sometimes by people who have either forgotten what it’s like or never experienced what it can be like. Some organisations would never care about your opinion...’

This view was repeated many times during the interviews, once almost verbatim, by Participant E10-F-II-TM,

‘I think there are a lot of worse places to work and people may not realise they have opportunities to speak to [the management] and I don’t think people appreciate that enough.’

Nevertheless, the organisation climate of Organisation E had definite sombre overtones. As Participant E13-M-II-TL said,

‘We are known for being dour in North East Scotland and we have dour folk here.’

However, to change the profile of the organisation and to recharge its morale, the CEO had recently employed a group of young and effervescent post- graduates, who were not afraid to speak up. As the Operations Manager said,

‘Certainly the younger people ask a lot of questions but some older ones never do...’

This was probably because the younger post graduates were endorsed and encouraged to do so by the CEO, they were very much the in-group in the organisation, compared to the older and less educated members of the organisation who felt marginalised and neglected at times, and had therefore become even more introverted and uncommunicative with the management.

The CEO had commissioned an internal communication audit, organised in-house, as, in his own words, ‘there were some real issues about engagement between management and staff and a lot of unhappiness and tension was being generated...’

The results had appalled him. As he said,

‘I met with the authors of the [communication document] which turned out to be a tirade, a tutorial about what is wrong with my management and what it’s like to be a chief executive ... which is very complicated....I think that’s where the balance is – the difference between it being a consultative exercise and a vote. They get to vote on where to go for the Christmas party but not on business strategy... but they get to contribute to the process. They just don’t get it. Often these contributions don’t appear obvious in the final outcome; so they sometimes think we don’t listen. I do listen, but don’t always include them in my decisions.’

These comments may appear to be examples of the automatic vigilance effect, which postulates an innate sensitivity most people have to any form of critical feedback (Pratto and John, 1991).

On the other hand, the Operations Director, Participant E4-F-I-TM, a woman, was however, quite nonchalant about the communication document,

‘It was the usual stuff from them [employees] ... about not getting enough chance to say thing ...’

This document, the essence of which is in the appendix below, was candid and blunt; it expressed dissatisfaction of many employees with the organisation climate and the need for better communication within the organisation, particularly upward communication. *See Appendix 41: A Précis of the Communication Document of June, 2005.*

In response to the pressing needs expressed in this document, a special communication forum was then established by the CEO, consisting of employees to look into the practicalities of issues concerning communication within the organisation. However, some employees were blasé about this. Participant E10-F-II-TM said,

‘Just now there is an impression that it’s not that good [communication within the organisation]. We have resurrected what used to be the communications forum...It hasn’t worked out exactly how the management team envisaged.’

Further, Participant E17-M-III-TS explained,

‘I get freedom to do my job – I can leave early to avoid road works, for instance. So there are good things about working here but there are problems with other things, like communication. You may have picked up on some of the feeling that some things are going wrong... I don’t think it

[communication forum] will succeed. I am not a negative person, but I don't think anything will really change.'

Nonetheless, the winds of change were in the air. Whether or not they would blow away and dispel the blues of Organisation E was another story.

4.1.2.4 A Snapshot of Organisation P

This is an innovative oil organisation, its success is based on the strategic advantage of its unique product, which it leases and develops. It has recently been acquired by a major oil conglomerate, referred to in this study as the ‘mother company.’ Although it does have a limited hierarchy, its structure is flatter than those of Organisation C, B or E. Instead, it is bifurcated into teams or clusters instead of stratified echelons.

Organisation P enjoys a lower degree of consensus and conformity compared to Organisation C, B or E. As Ackoff et al., (2007: 13/14): argued: ‘The level of conformity in an organisation is in inverse proportion to its creative ability.’ This is because:

‘it is impossible to regiment a creative mind... a creative person, unlike a drudge, cannot turn himself or herself off and on easily. Organisations that value creativity must develop tolerance for unconventional behaviour...Organisations that cannot accommodate conformity will not be able to retain creative people. Conformity is a poor substitute for creativity’ Ackoff et al., 2007: 13/14).

The conformity that Ackoff et al., (2007) talks about is conformity in general, as in impression management, but would include opinion conformity, one of the facets of ingratiation theory.

Ackoff et al., (2007: 14), however, admitted that innovative organisations may be inventive and creative, but within the confines of a conformist, conventional culture. In practice, this research suggests, that Ackhoff et al.,’s conclusion may be a contradiction in terms. Participant P1-M-II-TS said,

‘[Employees] have to know that they are allowed to [be creative] in that the organisation they work for truly encourages that.’

However as Participant P1-M-II-TS explained,

‘... actually, communication is not too open with my mates and my boss I think. I work by myself. I am just motivated to get things done... but I wouldn’t speak up about a criticism of the management method. Actually, I would prefer to get it out in the open and that’s always worked for me in the past but it didn’t work here. No one really wants to listen. I wouldn’t say it does me any good. I used to measure the way I expressed [myself]. But now I have closed up, have lost interest in communicating.’

Or as another technical engineer [P12-M-II-TS] said,

‘Because my discipline is quite different to everyone else’s, I still find that they don’t understand what I am working on. Apart from that, communication seems to be okay.’

Yet again, another eccentric engineer, Participant P12-M-II-TS, said,

‘Here it is very isolated. You have to come up with solutions on your own. Because of my expertise I don’t really go to him [line manager] if I have any problems as he won’t be able to answer them...’

See Appendix 42: A Short History Of Organisation P From The Perspective Of The Managing Director.

Ackoff et al., (2007) might well have a point about innovative organisations. Although Organisation P is a small, innovative organisation, on the whole, it enjoys a pleasant climate compared to the culture of the mother company, which has a rigid hierarchy and the resulting power differentials create drawbacks in its internal communication. Employees are wary of the possible change that may result because the organisation is now part of a bigger conglomerate:

‘It’s a more relaxed culture in [this company], although as time goes on and we get bigger, things change and we get more like [the mother company]...It [the company] has changed quite a lot, I think. ... I think we are a bit more

diluted now and, because we are so much bigger, everything is spread out so there is a lack of communication. We don't communicate properly like we did in the early days when we were smaller. Now it's tied into the bigger organisation' [P3-M-II-TL].

However, the researcher found that within Organisation P, upward communication flows well, except for a few instances, where the participants, zealous and highly creative technicians, were found to be extremely possessive of 'the ownership of my process' (P1-M-II-TS) and reluctant to communicate with their team leader.

Participant P1-M-II-TS said,

'There are definitely no obstructions to communications but we engineers are all a bit self-contained and introverted'

Most of the time, however, communication was shaped by the passion of innovation and is direct and forthright. As Participant P13-F-II-TM said,

'Yes, our general communication is very good.'

4.1.3 The Variables

The research will now go on to discuss the themes identified for interpretation from the data and the literature review, as the eight variables of the study. These are, briefly:

1. Variable 1: Upward communication; its practical aspects
2. Variable 2: Employee silence; the importance of trust
3. Variable 3: The use or otherwise of ingratiation and impression management⁴
4. Variable 4: The Superior and the subordinate, distance and Romance of Leadership Theory
5. Variable 5: Power, politics and size
6. Variable 6: The Effects of downsizing within Organisation
7. Variable 7: The influence of national culture on organisational climate
8. Variable 8: The impact of gender on upward communication

4.2 Upward Communication

'I'd love to work for a company where they listened to the employees.'
[Participant B33-M-II-TM]

'The commitment of employees to the enterprise is primarily engaged ... by the amount of attention which is paid to their perceived needs' (Hargie and Tourish, 2000: 14). An important way in which employees gain a sense of control over their environment is by expressing their preferences (Lind and Tyler, 1988). Argyris (1987) suggested that employees' questions form two categories, the WIIFME questions (What is in it for me?) and WIIFU (What is in it for us?) questions. As Hargie and Tourish (2000: 13) has explained, 'Through opening up channels of communication people can articulate their needs, reduce uncertainty by gaining access to information, develop opportunities to influence the decision making process and satisfy the fundamental need to make a difference.'

The essence of natural and unproblematic organisational upward communication is captured in the words of Participant B15-M-III-TM, a fireman, the chief of the watch at Organisation B,

'I feel people are motivated if they feel they are listened to and taken seriously...When they have more control, that gives them motivation and a good feeling for work. And being there for them if they have a problem...'

Larkin (1986: 36), has suggested that energizing employee voice may create organisational value by 'encouraging open communication which encourages innovation and the creation of the 'humanistic organisation.' Ilgen et al., (1979)

argued that managers often either reject or discount opinions and feedback from employees, particularly when those opinions differ from their own views (Ilgen et al., 1979). Management may also convey, consciously or unconsciously, annoyance or even hostility toward messengers of unwanted news (Rosen and Tesser, 1970). Managers who hold these beliefs are unlikely to engage in much informal feedback seeking from subordinates. This is true of Organisation B, where the CEO is brilliant at giving flamboyant presentations at communication workshops and seeking public feedback, but does not encourage employee upward communication on an informal level. As a young security guard in the organisation said,

‘He says his door is open, but from what I have heard, I wouldn’t risk it...’

4.2.1 The Similarity Bias

There is evidence in the data of the similarity bias; people are drawn to people who they perceive as being similar to themselves (Cialdini et al., 19991, 2000, and 2001; Weber, 1994). This was even so in the case of Organisation C,

‘I have known (the Managing Director) most of his life. He comes from the same area as I do and we knew each other as schoolboys. He is very straightforward – you know exactly where you are with him...There is no messing about and I like that.’ [C10-F-II-TL]

The researcher was struck by the open lines of communication between the employees and their line managers in Organisation C. As Participant C32-M-III-TL said,

‘Very open communication here, no barriers. If someone wants to tell me something they will and vice versa...I feel free to talk to (my line manager)...I would go to him (the line manager) if I had a different opinion or

criticism and have an open discussion with him.... Sometimes it is ok but sometimes it will be difficult. I am not argumentative and will look for an easy solution if I can. But no, I wouldn't have a problem talking to my line manager.'

Similar dynamics were reflected in the attitudes of Participants C28-F-III-TL and C27-F-III-TL,

'Yes, if there is some problem...you just go and ask. I go to my line manager. It's ok. I don't see any problems at all.... No problem at all.'

'Usually everyone is very communicative. It is a really nice atmosphere here. Oh yes, he (line manager) is very easy to get on with. If you have an idea you feel quite comfortable expressing your ideas ...I guess I would normally speak up if there was something. We have a good rapport with the management.'

Thus, upward communication in Organisation C was good not just with the line manager but also with management team. In Organisation B and E, however, although employees often enjoyed a pleasant rapport and open channels of upward communication with their line managers, they were not comfortable about upward communication with the Managing Director or CEO, as the following direct quotations reveal:

'If I had a critical issue to raise with her [line manager], I feel free to do that ...I have a good relationship with [my line manager]... But I see other ...problems that arise with others, [the CEO] and even the management people, and a lot of it is a mishmash. We haven't got it right yet and a lot of that is down to communication... We could be doing it better. That's just my personal view...' [E22-F-III-TM]

'[The CEO] always says his door is open, so I guess it must be... but I have heard that people don't seem to be as motivated as they could be. I don't think there have been any great changes in communication here (after the communication document). But I am ok with [line manager].' [E16-F-III-TM]

'That's one of the problems. People make suggestions but he [the Managing Director] doesn't do anything about it. The perception to the person is that they will be reluctant to make bigger suggestions that turn out to be really

good because their smaller suggestions weren't acted on. However, I have no problems talking to [my line manger].’ [B10-F-III-TM]

‘Communication is erratic to say the least ... Speaking personally, if I had concerns with work issues, I would have no hesitation in speaking to my line manager, about it. No, I would have no qualms about speaking to her. The problem with [the Managing Director] is you ask him a question and he will throw a question back at you. Like why are you asking that question? I’ve noticed that if any of the management interact with him, they are stressed. Because he puts them on the spot.’ [B19-F-III-TM]

‘He [the Managing Director] always says his door is open. When it does happen [employees coming straight to the Managing Director to communicate about a critical matter] he doesn't really like the fact they are going straight to him, as he says then that they should be going through their line managers... Well, I'm not 100% myself when I see [the Managing Director] – I am very cautious when I put things across. I would rather speak to [my line manager].’[B20-M-III-TM]

De Vries (2001: 94) emphasises that effective organisation communication depends on people having ‘a healthy disrespect for their boss, feel[ing] free to express emotions and opinions openly, and [being] comfortable engaging in banter and give and take.’ This, unfortunately, is not the case for the Managing Director of Organisation B. It would appear from the interviews that the Managing Director is feared and disliked by his people, although at the same time he enjoys a reputation for making it a highly successful organisation. As Participant B4-M-III-TL says,

‘People are terrified to speak in front of him [the Managing Director].’

Furthermore, the views of the Managing Director of Organisation B appear to corroborate those of his employees. As he says,

‘There are various initiatives designed to get front line employees involved in making suggestions to shape their own future, which they [employees] are aware of...I have an open door policy, but I would really prefer them to go through their line manager...’

This may be contrasted with the *healthy disrespect* advocated by Kets de Vries, (2001), that Participant C21-M-II-TS has for his director, which motivates excellent upward communication,

‘If I had a criticism of the management, I would just tell them. I would go to X– he is a director of the works as well. He’s crazy; is a great character. He is hands on too... He has great experience... Well, the boss is the boss – you have to do what you are told. But I certainly give my views openly, X is a great guy, but he would have the final say.’

As a junior manager of Organisation P said,

‘I am comfortable speaking with [line manager] as we know each other very well. We really are a good team. Further up – I would be careful with [the Managing Director] but he’s a good guy; I think that’s just a healthy respect for his position. I think if I had a genuine grievance, he would listen I know.’

This analysis examines whether the quality of internal and upward communication within organisations can be shaped by artificially constructed communication strategies that employees are required to subscribe to, or whether open and natural upward communication stems naturally from an honest and genuine relationship between the subordinate and the superior. The researcher maintains that the latter is the case. As in the circle of life, it is born naturally when a genuinely sincere relationship is in place; this in turn, gives rise to and inspires the flow of good communication. The facilitating factor here is the trust and goodwill that develop in a symbiotic relationship between subordinate and superior; this will be discussed later in the analysis. As the Financial Director of Organisation B said of the excellent communication patterns that existed in his team,

‘Yes, the four of us in my department share a desk. It’s quite interesting as sometimes you hear something and become part of the conversation and other times you hear things when you are working and know it’s nothing to do with you, so you don’t bother. It works very well. And you have a nice open communication between these guys because of the level of mutual respect and

trust..... We've been working together a long time now and we're real friends. It's not just a manager/worker relationship, and it works really well. They know they have no barriers coming to me whenever they want...'

This attitude is in contrast with that of Participant B11-M-II-TS, a middle manager in Organisation B, who does not reach out to his staff, but simply waits for them to approach him,

'Normally it's the direct reports that feed to me although I do make an attempt to make myself available for the guys at the level below me. I am sure there is an access passage if they wish to see me.'

However, at Organisation B, there are some managers, who like the Financial Director, are greatly respected and liked because of their caring manner towards their people. One of these is the Customer Services Manager, who says,

'One of the things I will do is when I have my Friday meeting; I try to make it a light-hearted and interactive session. I try to get people involved and ask them what they feel about it and if they understand it. We have a bit of a laugh about it as well. I hope I get the message across but I do it in my style. Sometimes I'm not afraid to comment about the company as well and say it as I see it. I'm not 100% company man through and through...I think the strength of communication from my boys to me is that I am always available. *I make myself so.* Because of the open plan environment where we work people can get to me very easily. I listen and try to follow up with an answer if I can. If I need to go and find out the answer, I will and come back to them.'

Nonetheless, working relationships often do mutate and change, as has happened in a few cases in Organisation P, which has been taken over by a big oil conglomerate, referred to as 'the mother company',

'I can't think of any time when it's been critical and there's been any conflict here. People who have been here longer from the [the original company, before it became part of the mother company] days, have a good relationship. And we all appreciate that. We are all realistic about what's important and don't get upset about the little stuff. ...Now we are part of [the mother company] which is great in some ways but the individuals get a bit lost

perhaps. Relationships are diluted. I still think the [the small original company] way but maybe not everyone feels like that.’ [P5-M-II-TL]

‘It’s a more relaxed culture in [this company] although as time goes on and we get bigger, things change and we get more like [the mother company].’ [P3-M-II-TL]

4.2.2 Circumvention

The analysis proceeds to look at the dynamic of circumvention (Kassing, 2007), or ‘the grapevine’ as Participant E2-F-I-TM called diagonal communication,

‘The grapevine is wonderful – you hear a lot.’

Circumvention occurs when employees question their immediate supervisors’ behaviour or when they perceive that their immediate supervisors are not receptive to their upward communication (Kassing, 2002). The Operations Manager of Organisation E had an interesting story, which illustrates this,

‘A member of staff came to see me – and said that their line manager had no respect and couldn’t do the job – so that was very tricky, as I was one of the people who chose that person as their line manager. It turned out that others thought the same way. The feelings were partly justified but there were personality issues there too. They had different opinions and a different sense of humour. ... Yes, and I took on board what they were saying. But I told them no one will ever be a perfect line manager and they had to be patient and work with that person and try to improve the weak points. What we did I think worked fairly well although the relationship is still far from perfect.’

Furthermore, as the CEO of Organisation E said,

‘I don’t get a lot of direct approaches. I usually find out about stuff sideways.’

What he meant to say was that managers and employees, who were wary of approaching him, often went to the Operations Manager to get their point of view across.

In Organisation B, despite their communication strategies, there is often a great deal of confusion. This may be illustrated by looking at the two following direct quotations, the first from the Deputy Human Relations Manager, and the second from an articulate and bewildered security guard:

‘I think the dedication buy-in is there in the management team, but when I brief those below me and then they have to go and brief those below them, it probably doesn’t have the same meaning. It gets lost in translation ...you then have my equivalent briefing the subordinates, he then briefs someone else and then they are meant to brief someone else, so it loses its meaning and it can be a bit like playing ‘chinese whispers.’ The awkwardness with that is that if someone at the very lowest end asks a question, the chances are that the person doing the brief wouldn’t have any answers and that question has to come all the way back up the levels. So, its tricky... it doesn’t build confidence in us...’ [B16-F-I-TS], Deputy Human Relations Manager.

From an employee perspective, the outlook was perplexing,

‘That’s a difficult question you are asking me [who do you communicate with]. I am supposed to report to my actual line manager. And I used to do that but now I go above him as I get a quicker response as it’s better for me. But he couldn’t actually give me an answer. Well, I went above him and got an answer – it wasn’t what I wanted to hear – but I got an answer...Above me there are [line managers] and there are about a dozen of them. If you are not sure of something, you ask them. But the thing is, if you ask one you’ll get one response and if you ask another one you will get a different response. It should be more streamlined. That is one thing that annoys me. There is a communication breakdown there’ [B5-M-III-TM], a security guard.

4.2.3 Anonymous Upward Communication

Reflecting the problems with upward communication within Organisations B and E, the following quotations show that employees would value the chance to give anonymous communication. This can only be because they do not want to be identified and so increase the chances of retaliation against them. They would prefer

to be nameless and faceless while communicating with their superiors. Nevertheless, anonymity does have its practical advantages where upward communication is concerned, as the following reports indicate,

‘It would probably take a lot for me to pluck up the courage for me to go and speak to them but that’s me. Sometimes, they [management] try and make it easy and at the end of the ... meetings - they have questions and answers and now they have started letting you write down questions anonymously. So you don’t have to be embarrassed or worried.’ [E20-F-III-TS]

‘There are lots of different channels we can use [communication initiatives] but I still think it will be a continuous battle. I think we do need to think of other channels where employees can view their opinions without being afraid. The way it is now, I think they [the employees] would like something confidential and anonymous. But the management team said they have to put their name to it. So, I don’t know what will happen...If it’s really important to management to hear staff views, it has to be anonymous.’ [B20-M-III-TM]

4.2.4 Benefits of Upward Communication To Organisations

Empirical investigations have sought to establish that upward feedback, and open door policies deliver significant organizational benefits (Hegarty, 1974; London and Wohlers, 1991; Moravec et al., 1993; Reilly et al., 1996). However, in an often everyday occurrence within organisations, ‘people often have to make decisions about whether to speak up or remain silent’ (Milliken et al., 2003: 353).

This would not happen in the case of Organisation C. As the Managing Director Participant C4-M-I-TL, said,

‘... I am the chief executive and chairman. The business is all about people... and communication is vitally important through the company. It’s only by staff buying into something that they have any feeling of ownership. They need to want to do things, because they care.’

Using different words, but echoing the same sentiments, Participant P7-M-I-TL, The Managing Director of Organisation P maintained that,

‘Poor communication can contribute to gross inadequacies and poor productivity. I don’t believe there is anything as perfect communication - you just have to keep working at it, a work in progress, but it has a definite impact on the success of the organisation.’

They both knew a vital fact in organisation behaviour, that an improvement in the quality of communication, particularly upward communication, creates value for the organisation and augments its productivity. Kassing (1998: 221) made a pertinent point: ‘Dissent contains valuable corrective feedback necessary for organizational success.’ When employees choose not to share their feedback within organizations, organizations suffer by losing information that may be beneficial (Hirschman, 1970).

Even middle management often recognised this fact; as Participant C19-M-II-TS said,

‘As far as upward communication is concerned, it’s very open here. If I have a problem I just speak to [my line managers] directly and very openly. That helps with managing the project as we can make decisions quickly so it’s very good.’

4.2.5 Summary

This analysis demonstrates a wide ranging awareness that upward communication is an important facet of organisational life. However, it also reveals enormous disparities in the extent to which upward communication is appreciated by employees on the one side, and the reluctance of management to endorse it, on the other. Except

in the case of Organisation C, and perhaps to a lesser extent with Organisation P, there would appear to be serious dilemmas with the conduits of upward communication. This is investigated further in the next section on silence and voice.

4.3 Silence, Trust, Tenure

'Nothing strengthens authority as much as silence.'

Charles de Gaulle (1890-1970)

This section of the analysis examines the syndrome of employee silence in the organisations. It proceeds to look at the impact of trust on upward communication and the effect of demographic similarity on the manner in which upward communication takes place. Finally, the study looks at whether the time the employee has spent in the organisation or with the superior impacts on the tenor and flow of upward communication.

Morrison and Milliken (2000) argued that, within organisations, people often have to make decisions about whether to speak up or remain silent and in many cases they choose the safe response of silence, withholding input that could be valuable to others or thoughts that they wish they could express. As Perlow (2003: 3) has emphasized, 'The social virtues of silence are reinforced by our survival instincts, the frequent conclusion of employees seemed to be, "When in doubt, keep your mouth shut". As Participant E9- F -II –TS explained,

'Definitely people stay silent; they don't want to speak up, when in doubt, maybe also because of a fear of retaliation. Sometimes it's anything for a quiet life.'

4.3.1 Retaliation

Furthermore, Premeaux and Bedian (1993), like Milliken et al., (2003), have suggested that many employees are hesitant to express their opinions or voice their views because doing so might lead to retaliation or some form of reprisal, which might have an effect on their livelihoods. Consequently, they remain silent rather than speak up about office encounters, actions or ideas and issues. For instance, Participant B28-M-III-TM, a confident, outspoken fireman said,

‘I think that’s wrong as a lot of people here are very interested in the company and want it to do well but they don’t all want to stand up and speak up to him and be counted ...He [Managing Director] likes people who agree with him, don’t argue, just do as they’re told. .. Some people will speak their mind but others are too scared....I guess I speak up too much...My boys respect me for it but well the boss doesn’t. I have gone for promotion and it’s just not happening. Yes, and I’ve given up. I am not going to speak up any more....I was on the verge of raising a grievance at one stage but now I think what is the point... So I have given up.’

The following direct reports from people in Organisation E further make this point:

‘That’s exactly what it’s like here [employees remaining silent for fear of retaliation]. Definitely! Even I who feels relatively comfortable would think twice about raising an important issue. Certainly not in public... Sometimes not even in private...The outcome could be dangerous...They [management] don’t like to be challenged.’ [E15-F-II-TS]

‘There are people in any organisation who prefer to remain silent. They do their job and go home. They don’t want to get involved. It could be difficult if they spoke up. [E21-F-II-TS]

‘Remaining silent – there is an element of fear of retaliation, that’s human nature really. Maybe there’s a confidence issue too.’ [E8-F-II-TM]

‘I have used it, yes [silence]. I am quite quiet and don’t like to stand out so I would feel uncomfortable speaking up and I am sure it would stick with certain of the management who won’t forget about it and it will sooner or later effect you at work. And it shouldn’t be like that. But it is ...’ [E9- F -II –TS].

Even in Organisation C, where upward communication flows openly, Participant C12-M-II-TM said:

‘Employee silence? Yes, even with the excellent communication flows we have, I think that’s prevalent in our company – and probably in a lot of organisations. I think we have some quite opinionated people in private who say nothing in public. If they have a strong opinion, we would rather they voiced it and got it out of their system if nothing else. If they don’t, the resentment builds up and, all of a sudden, they will threaten to resign. It would be better if they got it out of their system. Often you don’t know there is even a problem until it’s too late. Generally these things can be resolved. So I would say remaining silent happens quite a lot...’

However, Participant C14-M-II-TL emphasized,

‘Well there is no problem here with speaking up, although some people may be a bit hesitant, not wanting to rock the boat etc. – but there are no fears of repercussions, management is fair. I wouldn’t be scared to express myself for instance...’

In Organisation B, Participant B11-M-II-TS said, speaking of the phenomenon of employee silence,

‘I think they are afraid of retaliation. And I think some of it is cowardice. They just don’t want to follow it through because of making a name for themselves, be seen to be negative. Some are very clever – they can be very devious but because they don’t want to be labelled as negative, they will incite others to do the job for them...’

The CEO of Organisation E had an interesting perspective on silence and perhaps revealed a self efficacy bias,

‘I generally do want debate most of the time. I don’t get a lot of it from individual members of staff or I don’t see it. I do tend to make people give me an opinion. I know how to provoke them, almost force them. I am sure a lot of them only give me part of what they think because they are not confident enough in themselves or what they really think is really so off-beam they are worried about vengeance, which again is not my style...’

4.3.2 Employees Impressions Formed from Limited and Inaccurate Information

The process of organisational sensemaking can give rise to biased perceptions, as employees struggle to form coherent observations on the basis of limited information, especially so in an organisation that is undergoing change (Ashforth, 1985). Employees, therefore, make sense of managerial actions based on limited and often incorrect knowledge, particularly so when internal communication patterns are warped and upward communication is muted. Employees often learn vicariously about management actions and behaviours rather than speak up in an appropriate manner and ask about them. For instance, an alienated member of the security team at Organisation B said,

‘Part of my job description is to challenge the norm and the Managing Director does not want to be challenged. He regards it as threatening. He said he wants us to read the [in-house magazine] thing every six to eight weeks as the staff say they don’t see management. So his idea is that I have to read this and that fulfils that. The problem there is what you define as management. His definition is that he is the Managing Director and I am not. I have no input into the decision making. I don’t think that’s right. All I do is I just follow orders, orders, orders...!!’

A junior manager of Organisation B, B13-M-II-TL, explained this dynamic of warped sensemaking or sensemaking that has gone wrong,

‘I know everyone’s name who works here. And now two guys are going [downsized] from our department. It’s personal to me. The reason that we take it hard is that we are mates. They won’t be there any more and there’s an element of suspicion amongst us of what the bigger picture is. We talk amongst ourselves... People are coming up with things like we are being downsized to be sold off. It grows arms and legs.’

Morrison and Milliken (2000) maintained that the existence of an alternate employee belief structure in organizations, often born of distorted sensemaking, is associated with a lack of formal communication systems for soliciting employee feedback.

However, in Organisation B, this study found that the converse was true. The Managing Director had launched a remarkable communication strategy, with numerous communication workshops and seminars, which, however, did not address the issue of downsizing in the organisation. This research maintains that upward communication would probably have improved within the organisation were it not for the fear and anxiety that paralysed employee voice because of the downsizing or restructuring strategy. Thus, the negative effects of the downsizing strategy stifled the possible successes of the communication initiatives. The following are interviewee responses from Organisation B that speak for themselves:

Participant B20-M-III-TM said,

‘I don’t see the point of speaking up, specially now, when it can be so dangerous for my future. You don’t seem to understand... people here are feeling very insecure....’

Furthermore, Participant B33-M-II-TM of Organisation B elucidated,

‘He [the Managing Director] doesn’t like it [critical feedback], and he will let you know. It’s not what he wants to hear. He won’t take it on board and deal with it. None of them [senior management] will. I have a problem with their lack of courage, their lack of moral integrity. If you are responsible for someone else’s wellbeing you should be making their working conditions as good as possible, not taking away jobs....Very few people would feel free to speak up here inspite of the [communication workshops]... They will speak amongst themselves... they feel unhappy and powerless. These [communication initiatives] don’t make a difference...’

As Participant B7-M-III-TM continued,

‘We went through a period in this organisation, some time ago, when oil took a severe downturn and we handled it collectively much better then. We made compromises then and everyone tried to do a little bit more and we managed it. We felt our worth and contributed to solve the situation. Now there is none of that but even more insulting is the way they patronise you to such a degree with these [communication workshops]. But they are making vast sums of money now, big profits. And we are terrified to speak in front of him

[the Managing Director]. The company is making money, there's not much wrong here. I don't know why they do it, but it's insulting.'

4.3.3 Infoglut and Datasmog

Studies on decision making and strategy formulation have revealed that that multiple perspectives within management teams have a beneficial effect on the quality and effectiveness of organisational decision making (Hargie et al., 2004). Alternatively, unrestrained employee input is also counterproductive. It can create a complaining or 'whining' culture and derail the course of action of the decision-making process (Glauser, 1984). As the Managing Director of Organisation C explained,

'I am always looking for strong people with their own opinions but if everyone was like that, even too outspoken, I couldn't run the organisation... I need people who just get on with their job.'

From the opposite perspective, a few employees in Organisation B felt overwhelmed by the numerous communication strategies launched by the Managing Director, an alternate manifestation of 'infoglut' or 'data smog.' An overabundance of information flow smothers understanding rather than enhances it. A young manager of Organisation B, B25-M-II-TM, explained,

'Maybe it [internal communication] has got better somewhat, but I think in some cases there tends to be too many lines of communication, too many talking points, too many new approaches to follow... It's very confusing. It's a bit of overkill...'

4.3.4 Different Metiers and Silence

Morrison and Milliken (2000) argued that employee silence is more likely to characterise mature and stable industries than newer or volatile industries. This

research responds that this generalisation is not absolute. Research in Organisation C showed that it was a stable and mature industry but did not suffer from employee silence. Participant C30-F-II-TS maintained, 'There is no problem here with communication.' On the other hand, Organisation B was also in a stable and mature industry, but had problems with the flow of upward communication in the organisation and with employee silence. As Participant B33-M-II-TM said,

'Everyone is getting analysed, assessed, we may be even told to go... but at the same time the MD is promoting [communication initiatives]...I personally don't want to be involved, not when they are getting rid of people. I'll just stay away and be silent...'

Research has suggested that in order for organizations to survive in high - momentum metiers, such as technology, computing, oil and gas production and exploration and information technology, they need to be adept at responding to organisation change (Eisenhardt, 1989). Thus, in these organisations, management is likely to be more inclined to value employee ideas, since these ideas may be seen as useful in the search for new innovations, strategies and products. As Participant P2-F-I-TM expressed it succinctly,

'We don't want people to hide what might be important so they are encouraged to speak up.'

This is accurate in the case of Organisation P, which had good upward communication, except for a few eccentric engineers who preferred to work in solitude. Participant P2-F-II-TM insisted,

'No, there is no silence thing here in our internal communication.'

However, this research further found that the open upward communication that exists in an oil company also characterised the communication in the fire-brigade and the

Department of Airfield Security of Organisation B. In these two sectors of the organisation, swift and honest upward communication is the norm. As Participant B29-M-II-TM, a senior officer of one of the watches of the fire brigade of Organisation B explained,

‘I have never done this silence thing myself. In the watch if there’s a problem we sort it out. We speak about things. If someone isn’t pulling their weight, the watch will handle it. Anything on the floor, they sort out themselves. If it comes to me, I will sort it – maybe not the way they want, but I will sort it. They take pride in how they run their watch. There is open communication. We talk about stuff over a cup of tea. It might get heated but it will get sorted out.’

The following direct reports from the interviews illustrate the open and honest upward communication in the department of airfield security: The head of the department of airfield security said,

‘They [my subordinates] don’t stay silent. I have direct reports once a week. I meet the supervisors every quarter and every six months. It’s actually a section meeting. Yes, and they are not shy at coming forward. They tell me exactly what they think. Certainly in my department we all speak up...but perhaps it’s not quite the same in some other departments.’ [B11-M-II-TS]

Participant B18-M-II-TM, the deputy airfield security officer, emphasised,

‘No, nothing like that, I don’t keep silent. None of us do in airfield security I work in safety so you have to speak up - it’s a safety concern. That’s how it is. If you don’t highlight a point of safety, it could be serious and very dangerous...’

Another airfield security officer clarified,

‘No silence or opinion conformity in our department. We do the safety on the airfield and it is important to speak up... It’s quite a small section and there are only 15 of us, so we work quite closely as a team so there’s always someone ready to say if they don’t agree. But they will say if they disagree and come up with other options. No one ever agrees if they don’t really.’

Therefore, this study argues that in organisational departments that deal with emergencies and security, employee silence is not an issue.

4.3.5 Cost Control and Upward Communication

Organizational silence is known to be more common in organizations with a strategic focus on cost control (Pfeffer and Leblebici, 1973, Morrison and Milliken, 2000). Such an organisation, for example, would be Organisation B, where downsizing is taking place to cut costs. The Human Relations Manager of Organisation B explained,

‘Because of the type of changes taking place in the organisation, we are almost being pitted against each other because there is competition ... for resources. The dynamics of the management team become different. There is competition between departments because of the cost cutting. People become aggrieved over small issues and particularly over the redundancies, but they kind of remain quiet these days...’

The following remark expresses the situation better,

‘So I think [this company] are trying to cut their charges... cutting cost...So yes, we’re busy as ever, making profits, but downsizing at the same time. I suspect in many departments people could be scared to even speak.’ [B35-M-II-TL]

As the Customer Services manager of Organisation B explained,

‘If we roster that in it costs money and we are focussed on cost in the business. Some of the other concerns – there’s an element of mistrust with the supervisors, a reluctance to express criticism, so when you have that embedded in the culture, it’s difficult to move on. If someone won’t speak up because of how it will be received... that’s not good.’

Kassing (1998) proposed that dissent could be expressed as articulated, antagonistic or displaced. Firstly, articulated dissent was viewed as constructive and it involved

expressing dissent to management. For instance, as the Finance Director of Organisation B [B8-M-I-TL] explained,

‘There are times I will remain silent where it’s not relevant to my area or I don’t really have an opinion. However, at times I have sat at meetings with the Managing Director – when I will choose to disagree. They accept that. I will stick to my guns if I feel really strongly about it, I will need to disagree. A lot of the time we are very much results driven so I need to get an answer or a result.’

The outspoken Human Relation manager, Participant B14-F-I-TM (who later became a victim of organisational re-structuring) said,

‘I have been here for many years and he is my fourth Managing Director and if I don’t agree with something I have to put my view across. I couldn’t stay quiet – that just doesn’t work. So what I have always done when I have had a new boss is say this is what you are here to do and I appreciate that of course and it has a huge value to the organisation. Here is what I am here to do and there will be times when we won’t agree. I’m not the type of person who will say something to you just because it’s what you want to hear. I will tell you the truth and you might not like it sometimes. ...I have learnt with him [Managing Director] to put my point across, but if he comes back and says I don’t give a shit, which he has done quite often, then I guess you have to choose whether to push it or accept that he is the Managing Director...’

Secondly, antagonistic dissent occurs when the employee expresses ‘adversarial’ and aggressive upward communication. In the organisations in which this research was carried out, this study found that this was not done very often in Scotland because it is not in keeping with Scottish cultural norms. As one of the directors of Organisation C, Participant C5-M-I-TL, explained,

‘Certainly the reticence to speak out forcefully is there in the culture, because the church is fairly dictatorial.... you are concerned about what people think about you and that affects how you will act. That comes from the church.’

Finally, ‘displaced dissent entails disagreeing without confronting or challenging’ (Kassing, 1998: 192). This kind of dissent would correspond to the existence of a vacuum in upward communication.

Furthermore, Kassing’s (1998: 185) research into employee silence ‘recognized the potential domination and submission created within organizations’ and how organization scholars have recognized that organizations exercise profound control over the lives of their employees (Deetz and Mumby, 1990). Unfortunately, in Organisation B, this was very much the case and Participant B4-M-II-TM of Organisation B explained,

‘Yes, it is fine if you have something good to say but if you have something critical or bad to say, they may feel it’s going to be a black mark against them. Negative communication would not be well received. So we stay quiet... There’s the attitude that if you don’t follow the rules, then go and work somewhere else.’

Furthermore, it is interesting to see how leaders of organisations handle the echoes of employee silence. The Managing Director of Organisation C explained,

‘They [employees] do bring issues to me. Of course I don’t know if people don’t come to me and stay silent... You will find that out. I heard recently that a couple of guys were complaining amongst themselves about things, but remained silent with me and so, I went out and spoke to one of them and we spoke for more than an hour about it as I felt that his opinion was important. He has been a long time with the company and we talked it through. He is at foreman level so I jumped at least one level of management to talk to him as I do feel it is always important to talk to my boys....’

However, organisational ‘silence like a cancer grows’ (Paul Simon, 1967) when it is not handled in a sympathetic and understanding manner. The attitude of the CEO of Organisation E speaks for itself:

'I have no doubt there are aspects of that (silence) here as there are many, many staff here and I can't reach all of them individually, so it really cannot be helped... I am sure it's there (silence) but I'm not really aware of it or haven't given it a lot of thought. I just continue to drive towards the positive. Not everyone agrees... I am not fussed about the little stuff, like silence.'

4.3.6 Publicness, Upward Communication and Silence

Within the organisation, the more public the behaviour, the more concerned the employee will be about how he or she appears to other employees and to his or her superior. A key issue influencing the relevance of public image concerns is publicness (Goffman, 1959). Furthermore, Ashford and Northcraft's (1992) research has cast light on the effect of publicness on public image concerns and the use of impression management.

This research goes a step further and suggests that the effect of publicness is not just applicable in the contexts of impression management and ingratiation, but also permeates the wider dynamics of upward communication in organisations. When employees remain silent at meetings, or at public gatherings in the organisation, it does not mean that they do not have anything to say; it might mean that they prefer not to speak up in public but would feel perfectly comfortable talking to their superior in private. Participant B11-M-II-TS said,

'There are several people who remain silent, who like to load the gun but won't fire it. They will wind their colleagues up. This may be because of shyness, embarrassment, a feeling of being intimidated before the superior in public, the fear of getting a reputation as a trouble-maker, and also perhaps, a worry that s/he may not be supported by his or her peers when he or she speaks up. He or she might also worry whether his or her concern is representative of the other employees' thoughts and feelings.'

As Participant E9-F-II-TS emphasized,

‘I think I am probably less likely to stay silent, for instance when the CEO takes me out for lunch next week. It will just be the two of us...It’s an opportunity for me to speak up...’

Or as Participant P13-F-II-TM says,

‘And remaining silent is big, especially in a group of people. One on one, it’s a lot easier to express your opinion. I would find it hard to express my opinion in a group of people, don’t know why... I am sure a lot of people are like that, especially in my position. The boss won’t be argued with as much obviously...’

In Organisation B, Participant B15-M-III-TM explained,

‘If you go back to meetings that have been held and it’s a meeting talking about a change or critical area with senior management,you will find that people prior to the meeting will be going to town and moaning about things, but when it comes to the meeting itself, they’ll just sit there. It’s always the same three or four people who speak up; I am one of them. People have plenty to say when it’s just themselves. When you do speak up, you look around for some support and you don’t get it. You are only saying what people have been saying to you, but you don’t get backed up. They will nod on but if you have spoken up, you can feel isolated.’

Also important is the subordinate’s dependency on the superior, the source of reciprocal feedback (Leary and Kowalski, 1990; Tedeschi et al., 1984). Leary and Kowalski (1990) maintained that people are much less concerned about how they appear to strangers than they are about their mates and superiors. The research has reached this conclusion through the many interviews conducted, some direct quotations of which follow:

‘Remaining silent... That happens quite a bit, especially in larger group meetings when people don’t want to voice their opinions in public. Some people are reluctant to speak as they don’t want to appear negative. Maybe they are scared that other people won’t like them. They want to be liked and not just in a professional sense. A lot of people stay silent because they listen to all the opinions and form their own opinion later.’ [P6-M-II-TM]

‘Yes, people remain silent in meetings. I know for a fact that X will try to avoid the issue. She is concerned about rocking the boat. She will be the quietest one in a meeting. Y will express himself which is brilliant. I tell them to say what they think. ‘Tell me how you think the job needs to be done. I don’t know if X is just scared of being wrong perhaps. Y though will tell us, and so will Z. Maybe the older guys are more confident.’ [P11-M-I-TM]

‘Every quarter [the Managing Director] does about four or five [communication workshops], each for an hour, updating people of what’s happening with the business. If there are a lot of people ... they often sit and I know they don’t agree with him and they will still sit in silence. He wants to know but they stay silent... Once they are back in the canteen they will be open about how they really think. I think they would be thought more of if they did express themselves.’ [B16-F-II-TS]

Therefore, the self concept of the employee and the importance of the perceptions of the superior and his or her peers demarcate the subordinate’s choice of feedback strategies and tactics, including the option to speak up in public or remain silent. Ultimately, the desire to be liked and accepted, a thoroughly human preference, is the main reason underlying employee silence in public.

However, from a cultural standpoint, Craig (2003) maintains that many Scots do not speak up forcefully and vigorously at formal or public occasions because their culture derides pretentiousness: ‘The Scots do not like to draw attention to themselves. This is in stark contrast to Americans who do not have the same problem with being the centre of attention... The roots of Scottish reticence and shyness run deep into Scottish culture’ (Craig, 2003: 103). The CEO of Organisation E would agree,

‘One of the big challenges is ... getting people to contribute, to speak up. The silence we experience is not about fear of retaliation I don’t think. It’s more a natural reticence to speak up – it’s very Scottish. It’s part of the culture...’

However, not everyone would agree; Participant B21-M-II-TM explained,

'I am not sure I would speak out, but I would speak up. I wouldn't be frightened of him [Managing Director] because he is higher management. I have a responsibility to do my job, but if I was not happy with something I would bring it up. They couldn't sack me for speaking up constructively. I have gone to him in the past..... I am not confrontational – but I do speak up at these [communication workshops] I try to put my point across in a precise way. And I realize that they [management] feel threatenedbecause they maybe think you are questioning their ability to do their jobs...'

4.3.7 Locus of Control and Employee Silence

Earlier research has suggested that the likelihood of a person engaging in a particular act of upward influence or not is a function of the person's expectation that the act will be successful and the personal value of any resulting rewards to the individual (Rotter 1943, 1966). This study suggests that this dynamic may also apply to employee silence.

Locus of control is the degree to which people believe that control over their lives lies within their own sway. A person who believes that he or she controls the situation has a high internal locus of control, whereas someone who feels that he or she is at the mercy of fate has a high external locus of control (Vecchio and Appelbaum 1995). Ralston (1985) argues that an employee with a high internal locus of control is more likely to use ingratiation to influence his/her superior because s/he believes that s/he has control over the outcome.

This research goes a step further and suggests that employees with a high locus of control and a high sense of self-belief are more likely to speak up and communicate with their superiors rather than remain silent. Furthermore, the employees' self

confidence, strength of character and their courage of conviction also impact on their mental and moral capacity to speak up and communicate effectively with the superior.

As Participant C3-M-II-TM said,

‘I can only say I would not do the last one myself – remaining silent. I couldn’t agree with something that I didn’t really agree with.’

From Organisation P, Participant P6-M-II-TM maintained,

‘If I don’t agree I won’t remain silent. Otherwise you are just doing as you are told and that’s not conducive to progress, specially in this field (oil industry). You need to have *chutzpah*... It’s good to get things out and discuss them.’

Participant C30-F-II-TS agreed,

‘I wouldn’t say I agreed with something that I didn’t believe in and I am not sure I could remain silent either.’

The results of Milliken et al.,’s (2003) study and Ralston (1985) revealed the external and internal loci of control impact on the upward communication and upward influence tactics that employees use when communicating with their supervisors and which will be discussed later. Further, employees with a higher level of poise, self confidence and assurance express themselves more openly when communicating with their supervisors than those with lower levels of self confidence and poise.

Participant C11-F-II-TS said,

‘I am not good at conflict and not very confident about speaking up, I am quite shy too...so I would remain silent...I think everyone has to present themselves in a good manner.’

However, [C10-F-II-TL] maintained,

‘I am known for speaking my mind. It’s important that you say your piece.

4.3.8 Trust

Research has suggested that organisational trust is affected by the amount and quality of communication present in a relationship (Loomis, 1959; Barber, 1983). Studies have shown that the level of perceived trust and cooperative behaviour increases as communication increases (Morrison and Milliken, 2000). This is particularly so in the case of upward communication, where trust and good feeling can work together to moderate and temper the differentials of power and status that exist, by nature, in most organisational structures. As a manager in Organisation C said,

‘We are working as a team. If there was something wrong and it was my fault I would say that and like to think the rest of them would too. That helps a lot if people are honest with each other and will even apologise - where it’s right... I don’t think there is a communication problem – in fact, the opposite as far as I am concerned. I have never come across a problem while I have been here. Communication is very good.’ [C11-F-II-TS]

However, the Secretary of the Managing Director of Organisation B [B26-F-III-TL] said,

‘I think where I work and the relationship I have with my bosses I can be quite open and nice but at the back of your mind you have to remember you have to be respectful and they are they are the boss. I suppose, a lot of the time if I am frustrated about stuff, I wouldn’t say anything...’

Trust is looked upon as a necessary ingredient of effective cooperation and communication, the foundations for cohesive and productive relationships in organizations (Baier, 1986; Baker, 1987). Trust functions as a ‘lubricant’ greasing the way for efficient operations when people have confidence in other people’s words and deeds (Arrow, 1974, 1974). Trust in communication reduces the complexities of

transactions and exchanges swiftly and economically in organizational life (Powell, 1990, 1996; Williamson, 1993). Ultimately, the flame that kindles upward communication is the quality of the relationship of the subordinate and superior. As the founder of Organisation P explained,

‘I am a big supporter of the quality of relationships in an organisation. I thought about it unconsciously before but now very consciously. Historically where there has been the mechanical process of business - it’s about bits, cogs going round - everyone becomes obsessed with where they all are. But it’s the interaction between the cogs that allows you to tell the time. And then we move from content - the bits - to context and this is what holds all the bits together. And that’s transformational and that focuses on the relationship of the bits which is a totally different dynamic... It’s the quality of the relationship that allows you to move things around. It’s a healthy set up and you can get through most things if you have good relationships. So if your relationships are healthy it facilitates the upward communication.’ [P10-M-I-TL].

On the other hand, distrust is likely to have a disastrous effect on upward communication. When the subordinate is interacting with a manager s/he deems distrustful, especially when that manager holds significant power within an organizational hierarchy, the goal of communication becomes the protection of one’s interest and the reduction of one’s anxiety - rather than the accurate transmission of ideas (Bartolme, 1989). An employee may feel compelled to be evasive or to distort attitudes or information in communicating with a distrusted person; or ingratiation and impression management may warp the tenor of the message. On the other hand, trust is the foundation of the attributes of high-quality upward communication. The following is a direct quote from the chief of the watch of Organisation B,

‘If my boys [the firemen] have a criticism, they come to me directly... If they have something to say, they have the opportunity to say it. We discuss things afterwards and get all the comments. Everyone has a chance to say what they think... They are not scared to voice their opinions to me. They are my boys. It’s better for them to say what they need to say. There is co-ordination and

understanding and trust. Trust, very important... However, I wouldn't have all this openness during an actual fire incident though... That's the only time I will outrank them... I am then in charge...' [B33-M-II-TM]

The above direct quotation is interesting. It reveals, that in an emergency, the superior fire fighting officer, will switch his 'soft' attitude towards upward communication from subordinates, with a demand for the normal hierarchy of the watch, with him or her absolutely in charge, to ensure structure, order and discipline in handling the emergency. In Organisation B, in the fire service watch interviewed, this would seem to be the only time that the characteristically open attitude towards upward communication would be suspended.

Research has shown that social capital and favourable relationships play an important role in facilitating co-ordinated action, particularly in contexts where people need the trust and co-operation of others to achieve their objectives (Burt, Podolny and Baron, 1997). Sincere, well-meant and candid communication within the organisation builds and endorses social capital, which in turn creates the foundation on which good upward communication can grow.

4.3.9 Employees' Feelings Of Not Being Valued

Research on procedural justice has consistently shown that employees evaluate decision procedures more favourably when those procedures allow for employee input, even when this input does not have much impact on decision outcomes (Kramer and Tyler, 1996; Huo et al., 1996). According to Tyler's (1989) group value model, procedures that allow for employee voice are viewed positively, at least in

part, because they signal that employees are valued members of the organization. Eisenberger et al., (1986) work indicated that these feelings will affect organizational commitment and trust and therefore impact on upward communication. If employees feel their organization does not value them, they will be less likely to value, identify with, or trust the organization. This is well expressed in the words of a manager of Organisation B,

‘In an ideal world they should [management having an accurate perception of what employees feel] but it’s not an ideal world.... and they haven’t really got the time to know individual employee’s problems. They just have the basic information. I can appreciate that but, if you are a member of staff who has something to say and wants to be heard and you are ignored, it would be really soul-destroying.’ [B25-M-II-TM]

Furthermore, B18-M-II-TM of Organisation B says of the Managing Director,

‘But he has very domineering behaviour – what he [the Managing Director] is saying adapt to me, I am not going to adapt to you. It’s another way to keep the power differential.’

This would correspond with the views of Participant B27-F-II-TM,

‘I think in [the Managing Director’s communication workshops] you are getting a lot people remaining silent. Very few people will actually speak up. People look up at the ceiling and at the floor and the corners. But a lot are scared to make a fool of themselves and that’s why they tend to keep quiet. But you are also talking to this Managing Director which can be pretty daunting ... we don’t really know him...’

Powell (1996) argued that it is managers’ responsibility to create trust within their institutions. Moreover, trust is the bedrock of sound internal communication, especially upward communication. This dynamic is perhaps intuitively understood by leaders that care, like those of Organisation C and P. The leaders of Organisation B and E would seem to be naïvely unaware of this concept. The founder of Organisation P explained,

‘We did a very interesting exercise about values. We came up with trust, respect, honesty, etc. There was no right or wrong answer. Then someone said the best value in a company - it’s when you listen. We all agreed that we feel respected or trusted when we are listened to seriously. So, you need to listen to the words or the whole thing, the whole person? You have to have quality of trust.’

Speaking of the effect of employee silence Milliken et al., (2003: 1566) believed that ‘trustworthiness is clearly critical’ and suggested that the concept of ‘psychological safety’ or ‘how people decide what makes another person safe’ is vital to employee voice.

On a similar note, the Managing Director of Organisation C, maintained,

‘We are a loyal employer. We keep people here. We try to get people comfortable so there’s no blame culture. They are backed up in what they do. We get to know their qualities and whether they can do ... so I can put the right people in charge of the job. It also probably makes us inclined to have people who feel safe and comfortable in that environment ... It’s a constant dialogue.’

4.3.10 Cynicism

Cartwright and Holmes (2006) described the evolution of human relations as work in progress. In their view, the *traditional* deal stands for the workplace of twenty years ago as a place where employees offered loyalty, trust, and commitment in exchange for job security, training, promotion, and support from their employer. Over time, traditional deals have been substituted with *new* deals, whereby employees are expected to work longer hours, accept greater responsibility, be more flexible and tolerate continual change and ambiguity. They concluded that organisations have expected more from their workforce and provided little in return. Naus et al., (2004: 684) maintained, from a social exchange perspective, that employees may be

expected to somehow seek a new balance in the relationship with the employing organisation, by scaling down their contribution and becoming wary of reciprocation. In these circumstances, the flow of upward communication would be reluctant, slow and sluggish.

On the other hand, Hodson (2001: 3) spoke of worker dignity as ‘the ability to establish a sense of self worth and self respect and to appreciate the respect of others.’ Korman (1970, 1976) posited that an employee’s self-esteem is central to the explanation of work performance. Furthermore, self-consistency theory (Korman, 1970, 1976, 2001) predicts various forms of self defense by employees, who are motivated to live up to their traits, competencies and key values, thereby seeking to maintain positive self – images (Leonard et al, 1999). Often, employee cynicism or organisational cynicism has been described as a self-defensive attitude (Abraham, 2000; Kanter and Mirvis, 1989; Reichers et al., 1997), and one of the ‘alternative avenues to achieving dignity’ in the workplace’ (Hodson, 2001: 3). It would appear that cynicism safeguards this very dignity.

On the other hand, although the use of ingratiation and impression management behaviours might, indeed, be successful, they are sometimes mildly self denigrating to the actor (the employee), who might experience a momentary decrease in his/her self-esteem while using them. This would perhaps be the difference between cynicism on one hand and ingratiation and impression management on the other.

Employee distrust can lead to cynicism (Reichers, Wanous, and Austin, 1997). Although research indicates that some employees do identify with the organization as a result of management strategies, many employees resist them through dis-identification, and this in turn causes cynicism, a process through which employees dis-identify with cultural prescriptions, yet often still perform them (Fleming and Spicer, 2003). As a security guard at Organisation B said,

‘I am old school – 15 years here...I believe we had much better communication, much better employee/employer relationships before. Now I think it’s pretty bad, almost appalling. The problem is it’s quite deliberate. I don’t think senior management really wish to communicate and it suits them to continue to do it this way [new communication initiatives]. I know they get the synthetic return, people do what they have to do, but there is the lack of sincerity and it’s ridiculous and patronising. It’s insulting. There are good people here who are totally disillusioned by the whole situation. I am disillusioned. So are X, Y, Z [names of his friends]. So as you can tell, I am not enamoured with it at all, the opposite really. But I just get on with it...’

Employee silence can also create cynicism and disengagement amongst employees (Beer and Eisenstadt, 2000; Morrison and Milliken, 2000; Tamuz, 2001). These outcomes have serious long-term consequences for the employees and for their relationships with the organisation. Moreover, cynicism, like distrust, may be difficult to eliminate once it takes root (Morrison and Milliken, 2000: 722). As Participant B5-M-III-TM said,

‘Yes, upward communication is connected to morale here. A lot of people don’t believe they will be listened to. They are doubtful action would be taken to improve things. Some people just want to be safe and some are quite disgruntled and discontented. What can we do? Just endure it I suppose...’

Rogers (1947) introduced the concept of the importance of the self. In his view, the self is the central ingredient in human personality and the self is a social product, developing out of interpersonal relationships and people’s striving for consistency.

Furthermore, he maintained that there is a basic human need for positive regard both from others and from oneself. He also believed that in every human being, there is a tendency towards self-actualization and development so long as this is permitted and encouraged by an inviting environment. How is this manifest in this research?

For instance, in Organisation C, the organisation gives its employees loyalty and a high level of comfort and reaps the rewards. Levels of the quality of internal communication are high, and the organisation has hardly any employee turnover costs. However, in Organisation B, despite the extravagant and multitudinous communication initiatives recently launched by the Managing Director, the communication climate of the organisation is rendered desolate and barren, with the threat of downsizing hanging over the employees, in their perception, a disloyal and cruel procedure. Comfort levels of many employees are at rock bottom, complicated by the perceived authoritarian leadership style of the Managing Director. This destroys any chance of the creation of trust and loyalty and impedes the open and honest flow of upward communication. This is how the Human Relations Manager of Organisation B talked about the Managing Director:

‘I describe [the Managing Director] as schizophrenic ... because you can’t tell which [the Managing Director] you are going to get! He can be a very different person. Watching [the Managing Director] do a communication presentation to staff each quarter, you would think he is fantastic. He dazzles. I have not seen anyone present as well as he does. It’s amazing to watch. But that is not the same [Managing Director] who then comes and sits in the meetings, who turns into this monster, who is aggressive and authoritarian and dictatorial and swears and is very much: *I’m the Managing Director and I will decide... so you will do this!* It’s ridiculous. How can you respect such behaviour? And yet, what can I do? ‘

In contrast, one of the directors of Organisation, C8-M-I-TL said,

‘I think we (the management and employees of the company) have the same values which are real knowledge of the staff ... and trust and friendship, which we definitely have. And there is a natural flow but we keep in mind and work at various active ways of communicating. Usually face to face. We don’t leave it to chance. We work at it ... constantly.’

The importance of face to face communication and the personal touch, factors that lead to the construction of trust in an organisation, are well understood by the Managing Director of Organisation C, who says that reality lies in the eyes of people,

‘I find people fascinating. If I’m doing a deal with someone I like to have eye contact with them. I can tell what they’re thinking usually. I can’t do that if I am writing or phoning them. I hate emails when you are in the next room, especially if you are annoyed about something. I say, go see the person and look at them and you will find out the real story. You might have totally misinterpreted it. He might even apologise or you might apologise ... and it’s sorted. If you get an email you can make it worse by answering it.’

Employees, while planning dissent, consider whether it will result in retaliation, or whether it will be perceived as constructive (Kassing, 2001). Trust, or its deficiency, is therefore a key issue in determining the availability and efficacy of upward feedback. As the founder of Organisation P said,

‘Yes, definitely I have an excellent relationship with [the Managing Director] and the boys. We all get on together. And it’s true - we are all mates at the end of the day and work hard to get the job done. There are no egos and if there was, you’d soon be brought down to earth! I see how guys have treated me - I have had good and bad bosses and you learn from that. I never shout at people. That’s how we work here. There’s a lot of trust in the company and that comes from [the founder and the Managing Director] and it has carried on. [The mother company] is a great company but it’s a different culture....A lot of people have worked here and never been anywhere else and don’t know how lucky they are. Other places, if you can’t do the job you would be out. Here it’s more relaxed and people do perform. We guide people and get the best out of them. They appreciate that you trust them to come up with the good.’

Without trust, good upward communication is limited: ‘Subordinates who do not trust their superior are willing to suppress unfavourable information even if they know that such information is useful for decision making’ (O’Reilly et al., 1987: 612). Read

(1962) and Roberts and O'Reilly (1974) maintained that employees are most likely to filter or sift critical communication with their supervisors when they have aspirations to progress in the hierarchy of the organisation and when they lack trust in their superiors. As Participant P10-M-I-TL, explained,

'When we talk about communication, it does about 'tell' versus 'ask.' That's the big shift. We assume someone [the superior] knows something ... and there is a reluctance to ask. It shows you how strong or not the relationship is....You sometimes need a reality check at your own understanding of communication....I think we have to look at what is missing, what kind of communication we want. The withholding of that knowledge from the employees, or upward communication, as you call it... is compromising for the company in so many ways...Or maybe, what is masquerading as communication is poor relationships. That would be a healthier communication to have I think - to talk about relationships in the organisations...'

4.3.11 Tenure and Time

There is yet another factor that impacts in good upward communication: the passage of time. This has been succinctly expressed by a manager in Organisation B,

'Communication with the boss? It depends on the relationship you have with that person. I have a good relationship [with the line managers] and we have worked through problems in the past and things are very good now. If trust is there and you have a good relationship, it makes it easier to talk to them [line managers] and for them to talk to you, and you are less likely to have bad feeling and silence – you get the true opinions. *But you can only build this over time.*' [B34-F-II-TL]

On a similar note, on the subject of age and maturity, Participant B17-M-III-TL said,

'With difficult bosses, you just didn't do communication – you stayed silent. When I was younger I was a lot more vocal than I am now. If I didn't agree with something I would have said something. So I have a bit of a reputation but I am nearly 50, so have mellowed. I know now to sit back and wait.... Through time and experience you learn the more you shout it doesn't change anything unless you have the right personnel above you who are willing to take your points on board...'

Trust is, therefore, not an instant product; it is something that is created from a long period of congenial association between people. The chapter now looks at how trust and upward communication are artefacts that are built over time. The number of years the employee has spent in the organisation and amount of time that superior and subordinate have been working together, are two factors that impact on trust and quality of upward communication (Morrison and Milliken, 2000).

Research on the issue has found that employees decide whether to raise strategic issues with top management by reading the context for clues concerning context favourability' (Ashford et al., 1998; Dutton et al., 1997, 2002). A favourable context is described as one where management is perceived to be willing to listen, the culture is seen as generally supportive and there is relatively little uncertainty. However, assessing 'context favourability' correctly is something that can only develop over time, as the rapport between the superior and the subordinate grows. It is not an instantaneous artefact. As one of the employees of Organisation B said of his line manager, Participant B12-M-III-TS

'I have a great relationship with my boss...Yes, my boss very easy. He is a genuine, down to earth, nice man. I would trust him completely. I could talk to him about anything. But this has taken time...I have known him for about 14 years anyway as he started in security too. All the time he has been my boss I have been able to communicate with him.'

Could this possibly be a reason why the employees of Organisation B did not have a positive perception of their Managing Director, who had been there for just over a year and would move on to another position elsewhere? As an outspoken security guard at the organisation said,

‘Of course – he will move on and leave us behind and not give a f***. He can shove his [communication workshop].’

On the other hand, in Organisation P, despite being aware that the oil industry demands movement and transition, the Managing Director expresses his intention to be there for his organisation and employees for a long time,

‘Here everyone moves on after about a couple of years. You can’t get any continuity and it’s hard to build relationships and competence in the job. In two years you can show a good performance and you could make decisions that could have consequences down the road, you aren’t there to see it through. You can’t do much in two years. But I am here for the long run. Not going to move. And my sense of involvement with the company is 110%.’

As his Production Manager [P4-M-II-TL] said of him,

‘Yes, our communication is very good. I have known [the Managing Director] for many, many years - which helps. We know each other’s ways now and have a sound relationship.’

With the passage of time, and a modicum of good faith and mutual respect, relationships, both personal and professional, acquire a high comfort level in communication for both the subordinate and the superior. An empathy is created, born of the ease of association and good will that develops over time, with the result that the subordinate [and the superior] feel free to express himself/herself unreservedly. Participant P11-M-I-TM said,

‘I have known [the Managing Director] a long, long time. We worked together before. He was an offshore operator. We’re mates....’

The rationale for this was aptly addressed by Participant E11-F-II-TS, who reasoned,

‘I think the longer you are in a company, the more you can say. .. I haven’t been here too long. What I say... could create waves, maybe. I think you have to slowly earn the right to speak up.’

Tenure and time are, therefore, factors in the suppression of employee silence and the flow of good upward communication in the organisation.

However, before this study proceeds to examine and analyse the next variable, it may be revealing to see how the impact of tenure on a high quality of upward communication is compounded by the addition of another positive bias, such as the similarity bias (Cialdini, 2001), which argues that if people see someone as similar to themselves, they are more inclined to like and feel more comfortable with that person. In the following quotation from Participant E18-F-II-TM, the factor of time is accentuated by the fact that there is a hint of the similarity bias; the supervisor and the subordinate have children of the same age,

‘I have known (my line manager) for many, many years. ... I have a very good relationship with her. Also, her daughter is the same age as my son, so we have always communicated well. I am very comfortable speaking about anything with her, personal or business issues. She can be very firm but very fair. A very good person; we have so much in common.’

People are most comfortable and prefer to interact with those whom they perceive to be similar to themselves (Byrne, 1971; Ibarra, 1992). Individuals also prefer similar others as referents for validating their beliefs and perceptions (Festinger, 1954). This connects to a view in impression management (Goffman, 1959) that people are naturally drawn to people who are like themselves. On the other hand, demographic dissimilarity between top managers and employees is a factor that could increase the likelihood of management supporting beliefs that contribute to silence; this is examined in the next section.

Morrison and Milliken (2002) claimed that the similarity or dissimilarity of the demographic profile (for instance, gender, race, nationality, ethnicity or age) of the leader of the organisation or top management team in comparison to that of lower-level employees might influence the open flow of upward communication and the prevalence of silence-creating beliefs. Research on diversity has shown that salient differences often create distrust and fear of the unknown (Cox, 1993). Furthermore, dissimilarity is also likely to contribute more directly to a climate of silence by affecting the perceptions and beliefs of lower-level employees. Research has shown that the common experience of being different from those in positions of power leads to some predictable reactions on the part of those at lower levels in the hierarchy (Clegg et al., 2006; Kanter, 1977).

For instance, the Managing Director of Organisation B was very successful in his business endeavours; on the other hand, he came from England and was looked upon as someone from the outside. His culture and attitude were perceived to be very different from those of the Scots. Although the organisation did have quite a few employees from all over the U.K., the majority of them were Scottish. The researcher believes that it was not just that the employees were left feeling overwhelmed by the flashy communication strategies of the Managing Director and betrayed by the ongoing downsizing; they also felt estranged from the Managing Director, and his dissimilar manner and background. Upward communication streams to him were therefore muted, cautious and guarded. The following quotation illustrates the point:

‘It is especially difficult in this company. Our Managing Director comes from a totally different environment, from down south. He has a different attitude and doesn’t seem to be able to grasp the concepts and the culture here... I

think other people may be a bit reluctant to come to him for this reason...definitely lower down the chain. He's different, you see...' [B3-M-II-TM]

Switching to another perspective, Argyris (1977, 1991) similarly noted that most managers believe they must appear to be in unilateral control, and Redding (1985: 250) pointed to the implicit belief among managers that 'hired hands should put up or shut up.' This belief is related to the economic view of employees (Friedman, 1982), in which the only purpose of the organisation is to create profit. As an elderly security guard [B4-M-III-TL] who had been on the organisation for a long time said,

'I was told by an extremely senior manager that the management philosophy of the Managing Director is 'fit in or f*** off.' That tells you a lot....So as an individual you are not respected or involved – only a number.'

This attitude was definitely not appreciated at Organisation B. The Managing Director was perceived to have a ruthless arrogant streak, with is perceived by his employees to be incongruent with their own norms and mores. As Participant B36-F-II-TM at Organisation B said,

'[The Managing Director] is very upwardly focused. He has a supercilious, scornful attitude – he thinks we are all fools and no one is as good as he is... Very disdainful and patronizing ... He [the Managing Director] can also be quite condescending at times.'

On the other hand, in the same organisation, the Scottish Financial Director [who was from another part of Scotland and decided to retire prematurely, in reaction to the downsizing in his team and the company], is regarded by an employee at the Human Relations Department as,

'... probably the person I have the most respect for in the whole airport. He is very honest, sincere and caring.... We have always got on well – I would do anything for him. He is a nice guy and you can believe what he tells you. He won't spout the company line. And he is a financial manager – very money-

oriented. He doesn't deny that - but he also cares about the individuals and that's the difference.'

Therefore, this regard stemmed, not just from the fact that he was a Scot, but also because he was perceived to be a sound, principled, honest, trustworthy person, who cared for his staff.

This attitude may be contrasted to the following view of the Managing Director from Participant B7-M-III-TM:

'Some people call him David Blaine [the Managing Director] because it's all an illusion and he is a skilful con artist. It will serve his purpose. He will be successful....But he is destroying so many people and maybe even the character of [this organisation] ... He [the Managing Director] now has people so terrified they won't say a word.'

A young junior manager of Organisation B expressed herself forthrightly when she said,

'He [the Managing Director] is not from here and I can't be with him the same way I am with [my line manager]. My [line Manager], he actually lives in [the same village], and he fosters respect and loyalty because of the way he is. If he has an issue with you he will talk to you about it and give you a chance to explain. He drives you hard and wants things yesterday but has the human touch and knows how to ask and will support you. [The Managing Director] isn't like that and will put you on the spot in public... He's [the Managing Director] done it [put people on the spot in public] to several people and it's embarrassing. He expects people to laugh but I don't. It's a personality thing or maybe even a culture thing.... We [the junior] managers have all been put down in meetings. I have seen him [the Managing Director] do it to everyone. He just gives the impression that we are not as good as he is. I think that's what he really thinks. It's not our way here to be like that... He has said before he is not here to be liked... He's not really accepted here but his focus is whether he is liked by his bosses... I don't trust him [the Managing Director] at all. Very arrogant ... pompous. We don't do arrogant and pompous here... (North East Scotland) He has the little man syndrome....very conscious of being the boss and his own status and importance ... yes, this is the image he projects..'

In contrast, in Organisation, C, the respected and well - liked Managing Director and his very contented and secure employees enjoy the comfortable commonality of sharing the same cultural attitudes and ways of life. A quotation from Participant C2-M-I-TL illustrates this,

‘[The company] is like family in a way although we have grown bigger every year. But the culture is like that. As [the Managing Director] says, the door is always open; he means it, we know it and he is very respected in the organisation.’

However, employees are aware that the ambience of the organisation may be different under the leadership of the other director of the company who is earmarked to replace the present Managing Director, and is brisk, modern and forward thinking, and comes from the somewhat ‘different’ culture of the central belt of Scotland,

‘The old Managing Director is on the verge of retiring and [new director] may be taking over as managing director. It’s going to be so different.... But that is just a sign of the times. We have to be a bit more business-like I think. They could afford to be a bit more protective and paternal in the past but there isn’t as much room for that now. He [new director] speaks to you... but he is so cold ... formal. Maybe we will also have to become more hard-headed like him...’

Further, Morrison and Milliken (2002) maintained that that these beliefs are more likely to arise when the top management team is dominated by people with economic or financial backgrounds, than when the group is more functionally diverse or composed of individuals with backgrounds in general management. Because beliefs about employees being self-interested and untrustworthy are rooted in economic models of human behaviour, they are more likely to be held by those whose training and job experience have been oriented toward engineering, economics or finance (Pfeffer, 1997). This point is intriguing; it corresponds to the economic bent of the metiers of the Managing Directors of Organisation B and Organisation E, who were

from an economics and engineering background respectively. In Organisation C, however, the Managing Director is from a construction background, like his employees. The same is the case in Organisation P, where the Managing Director and the founder of the company are experienced ‘oil guys’ (as they call themselves), like the rest of the members of the company.

4.3.12 Ending on a High, the Positive Uses of Silence...

The following direct reports show how silence can be used in different ways in upward communication, not just as a result a lack of trust, negative organisational variables and personal insecurity or diffidence. A director of Organisation C, C3-M-I-TM, said,

‘Yes, I have used silence... It’s diplomatic – sometimes it’s not in your best interests to say what you really think. That’s just part of the job. Part of life... It takes practice – sometimes you can achieve more by being silent. It can be a great weapon.’

The use of silence as a tactic to get attention, or indeed, as a weapon, is explained by the founder of Organisation P,

‘Yes, I have done some of them myself. Remaining silent - I tend to do that more from a listening point of view....I might have a viewpoint on something and will wonder why people aren’t making that point. But I won’t bring it up....Yes, what I find is that I will say what I mean then... Stop... and then people will encourage me to continue. I will say... it’s okay, they’re not ready to listen yet. And then they will come back and say, you’re right...I’m listening now, tell me now....’

To conclude on an intriguing note, he says,

‘You see, silence can be formulating, reflecting. In some ways silence becomes the invitation...and the rest follows...’

Thomas Carlyle, the Scottish satirist (1795-1881) would have agreed. He insisted, 'Silence is more eloquent than words.'

See Appendix 43: A Pictorial Representation of the Percentages of Employee Silence and Employee Voice.

4.4 The Leader, Distance and Upward Communication

This section of the analysis examines different insights from top management and employees on leadership and about who initiates the pulse of upward communication in the organisation, the leader or the follower. Furthermore, it looks at how the employees' perceptions of their managers and leaders influence the manner in which they communicate with them. It also examines the impact on upward communication of the physical and psychological distance of the leader from his or her employees and concludes with a look at the leadership styles of the leaders of the four organisations and how this moulds upward communication.

4.4.1 Does The Boss Sets The Tone for Upward Communication?

Foucault (1980: 167) emphasized the power-position of the leader or the manager in the organisation:

‘Organizations are not equitable social systems. Those people in positions of dominance, those with a strong voice, are more likely to shape the nature of change in social settings. Organizational leaders in particular, as per the leader/ follower dualism, have traditionally held positions of dominance.’

He argued that by shaping identity formation, power is enabling and productive as well as subordinating.

As Participant P1-M-II-TS said,

‘It’s all driven by management styles...The people in the management positions suppress everyone.’

Foucault’s (1980) ideas implied that leaders can exercise power by measuring, evaluating and rewarding followers’ performance and behaviour. Upward communication from the employee is moulded by their understanding of this

dynamic. From this it may be inferred that it could be the leader who sets the tone for the pulse of upward communication in the organisation. This is summed up in the following words of Participant E18-F-II-TM.

‘Subordinates do not feel comfortable bringing critical issues up... they are expected to go to the line manager or the boss and try to get something done about problems and thing... But there is always the fear that they are sticking their head above the parapet and that could be dangerous.’

In general, organisational power dwells within its higher echelons. This is clear to the staff of an organisation; as an employee of Organisation E said,

‘The CEO is very much on the throne and he decides the strategy stuff...’

As the Managing Director of Organisation P [P7-M-I-TL] explained,

‘How I would react to contrary feedback? I would always listen - of course. But at the end of the day it would be my decision. My authority comes with my responsibility.’

However, getting access to the Managing Director is not easy and employees are aware of the distance they feel from the leader of the organisation:

‘The other problem is that it would be useful to speak to [the CEO] and ask what he thinks. In three years I have hardly spoken to him – perhaps 20 minutes in total...’ [P1-M-II-TS]

In Organisation B, the new communication strategies of the Managing Director do not seem to be quite as popular as he had expected. There could be many reasons for this, one of which is the fear, bad feeling and anxiety created by the downsizing in the organisation. However, the Customer Services Director of the organisation ventured another reason, a feeling of apprehension of interfacing too closely with the Managing Director and the senior management team,

‘Why is it that the operations people don’t come to these [communication] workshops and meetings [of the Managing Director]? I think it is because

there is a fear factor. Being as the same room in the Managing Director can be daunting for our people.’

This feeling of being intimidated by the leader of the organisation was illustrated by Participant E9-F-II-TS,

‘There were five of us who worked on the [communication document] and the CEO met with us and we gave him the report to read. He was quite shocked at the responses. It was a bit awkward actually. He didn’t agree with a lot of the things... but I don’t think we actually spoke up enough to him at this meeting. We weren’t strong enough to say enough. We conformed too much... We were scared of him, he is the big boss you see, I feel safer talking to my line manager...’

A young security guard from Organisation B, [B5-M-III-TM], ventured to explain why this is so, ‘There is a certain feeling of us and them – we are definitely not the same ...’

However, upward communication stalls and dwindles in many cases, not just because of the levers of power, but also because of other factors, such as a clash of personalities or characters. As Participant E6-M-II-TM said,

‘...a lot of it is down to your line manager’s qualities.’

This would seem to be especially so in Organisation B, where there is a sense of fear and apprehension from employees about any interaction with the very successful and powerful Managing Director,

‘There isn’t a lot of challenging [to the Managing Director], people wouldn’t dare. This is because of the way he is, he would put you down if you did..... If he said something, I don’t think anyone would stand up and say they disagreed....There is a lot of ‘nodding dog’ mentality, yes. If you are in a meeting and he looks at you, you’ll nod on just to show you’re listening. [B30-M-III-TL]

Moreover, as a young and articulate manager from Organisation B [B36-F-II-TM] clarified,

‘I feel that [the Managing Director] can be quite condescending and biting sarcasm at times. Yes, he is a brilliant man, very bright with a lot of good ideas. I think our relationship would improve if he wasn’t always undermining me.....It is quite off-putting and so, I clam up....’

Participant P6-M-II-TM believed that communication of the subordinate to the superior depends on the manner of the superordinate,

‘It depends on the person you report to. Our boss has some really electric hairdryer moments... If someone is consistent and is calm you will always be honest with them. If they react badly, you might not open up to them....It has to come from the top.’

Another director of the same organisation [Participant P4-M-I-TL] explained:

‘[The Managing Director] is very direct and assertive – that’s one of his strong points as the boss. Getting his attention is a little harder as he has a short attention span, always flitting from one thing to another. He has immense flows of nervous energy... If you get him in the right mood, he is brilliant - but when he gets bad tempered and stressed...then it’s not worth asking anything!’

However, this note of repressed upward communication that stems as a reaction to the leader’s behaviour may be contrasted with the attitudes that exist in Organisation C towards the Managing Director:

‘He [the Managing Director] is very approachable for the head of a large company. People are not in awe of him. Not at all... He knows the building trade well – he came up through the trade himself and knows what can go wrong so he is not hard to approach. He is down to earth, very hands-on...He is very good and very supportive of what you are doing. We respect him a lot. Yes, we feel we can approach him for anything and if you do something wrong he is not afraid to tell you either...’ [Participant C26-M-III-TL]

Upward communication or antagonistic dissent can sometimes be unpleasantly and aggressively expressed by an employee (Kassing, 2001), as the following story of the

Managing Director of Organisation P indicates, and this is something many leaders find unacceptable:

‘It was a stressful moment when things were very busy, very busy... and I made a decision and someone (an employee) didn’t agree with it. He snapped and literally told me off - very forcefully and aggressively, with lots of blue language. It was almost abusive.... in front of some of his colleagues, other people too. I tried to calm the situation down by saying you, are emotional – let’s discuss this in a little while when you have calmed down. You see, I have no problem if someone wants to take me to one side and say something and I don’t hold a grudge. But the next day, it was clear that this incident had been relayed through the whole division; so I had to make a point. I actually left it until the guy was on shift next cycle, about four or five days later. I let him cool down and I called him in and I made it very clear, very clear... that that is not acceptable... I needed to put it right... Oh, it’s forgotten about now but he knows he can’t do that again.’

An amusing glimpse of the false bravado that can often surface when subordinates interface with their leaders lies in the words of Participant C2-M-I-TL,

‘Some people might be too scared to go and see him [the Managing Director]...but not me...If I had to. I would knock on his door and go in and speak and he will listen. He is good at listening. He will give his view*and then I will agree!*

However, although perceptions of the superior do shape upward communication, the situation is interfaced and complicated; sometimes within the same organisation, there can be varying perceptions of its two leaders, which creates different flows of upward communication to each of the leaders. The perception of the Participant P6-M-II-TM is,

‘[The present Managing Director] tends to be highly strung, emotional, maybe even hot headed... But he will still make a decision. On the other hand, [the founder] is good at gathering the facts and making you think about things you hadn’t thought about. He asks us for our input. But making the decision was difficult for [the founder] in my experience. He would get the group to make the decision rather than he make it. Whenever I had to approach [the founder] before for a decision, he very often wouldn’t or couldn’t make it. He would

always defer. He is too cautious but [the Managing Director] is the opposite – full of energy and determination.’

On the other hand, Participant P6-M-II-TM maintained,

‘[The founder of the company] is very people-oriented. You can talk to him anytime... No worries... I think that’s probably why [this company] had the family-type culture. That would be very important to him. It would be less important to [the present Managing Director] although he does give it credence. But sometimes his [present Managing Director’s] enthusiasm and impatience and his hyper energy overtakes things. He can be much focussed but can get off track quickly. He can be inconsistent at times... He is a crazy guy... don’t get me wrong, he is extremely dynamic and competent... You just learn how to handle him, how to approach him and you have to choose the right time to approach him.’

The flow of upward communication to these two leaders of Organisation P, is therefore, moulded by the manner in which the subordinates pace their upward communication to them individually.

Before the analysis proceeds to look at whether it is the subordinates who shape upward communication, it glances at an unusual and intriguing rationale as to why a certain manager in Organisation P [P1-M-II-TS] would not communicate openly with his superior:

‘I think my situation is a bit different from others as my boss is a bit wary of me - I am a threat to him. I don’t think he wants me to be too impressive, so he stifles me. That’s what I think – I am more experienced than he is...It can be very frustrating. He is jealous of me...So, my communications with him are not well received... he knows I am capable of coming up with solutions but he wants to be the one who does that. So he keeps me downAnd now I have stopped speaking up...’

Could a superior actually stifle a subordinate through envy? Friedrich Schiller (1783) said, ‘Envy is the great exaggerator.’ Nonetheless, this dynamic did impact negatively on the flow of upward communication from Participant P1-M-II-TS. It would appear,

therefore, that it is the superior who initiates the timbre of upward communication in the organisation.

4.4.2 The Significance of Followership in Upward Communication

Nonetheless, in certain cases, as revealed by the empirical data that follows, employees of the organisation end up shaping the tone and pulse of upward communication. They initiate and pace their upward communication by gauging the situation, assessing the climate of the organisation and become adept at picking the right moment to communicate with their leaders, or not.

Shamir (2007) has argued that subordinates are often initiators of change which could suggest that employees have a latent ability to manipulate upward communication within the organisation. This supports the findings of Morrison and Milliken (2000) and Milliken et al., (2003) - employees venture suggestions, only to be turned down by the superior, and a pernicious pattern results that in time leads to employee silence. As a manager from Organisation E said,

‘I don’t know if I would really feel free in talking to him. He [the CEO] is opinionated. I called him about an issue once and he dismissed it arrogantly ... but I wanted him to be aware of it. It was unpleasantly done and I felt humiliated... But that put me off ever doing it again.’ [E12-F-II-TS]

In contrast, the Managing Director of Organisation C has an attitude that encourages his employees to speak up:

‘[The Managing Director] is a straightforward, plain-speaking person. The cards are on the table at all times and I have a lot of respect for him. He says his door is always open; he means it. He will usually find the time to talk to you if you have a problem.’ [C14-M-II-TL]

However, in Organisation B, over the course of several months, many employees formed a negative perception of the Managing Director and therefore decided not to communicate with the management:

‘We have had issues in this station in the last few years where management it would seem, have dragged their arse and that in turn creates frustration which overflows and guys start to become disillusioned. It snowballs. Lots of trivia becomes a big issue. It keeps adding on. When you don’t see an end result and they keep coming back with excuses, the guys don’t have time for it any more. They lose trust in the [management]. As for the Managing Director, he is plastic fantastic...’ [B21-M-II-TM]

Yet again, this attitude reverberates in Organisation B:

‘The problem with the top HR people is that I personally think they make or break staff. They can either help you develop by promotion or they can say you are surplus to requirement – there’s the door. I have had my fingers burned trying to make contact through HR about an issue that was important to me and it backfired and made my life here miserable for ages. That’s one reason why I wouldn’t want to approach the HR Director or the Managing Director or anyone in senior management about issues again.’ [B25-M-II-TM]

Furthermore, the research of Giddens (1979, 1984, 1987, and 1991) maintained that the leader might not set the tenor for upward communication within the organisation. It could therefore, transpire that in some instances, the employees set the tone for upward communication. However, Giddens’s notion of the dialectic of control holds that power relations between the leader and the employee are always two-way and interdependent. Employees are often shrewd at gauging the moods of their leaders and become astute at how they can handle their leaders and managers effectively, as the following remarks indicate,

‘I am very aware that [the boss] takes skilful handling; he can be so moody at times, but I know how to get around him.’ [P14-F-III-TS]

Green and Knippen (2003) emphasized that when employees collaborate with the management it requires communication. This, in turn, would mean that employees who want to take control of their work need to use ingenuity in communicating upward and thus become the main regulators of upward communication in the organisation. As Participant B14-F-I-TM said,

‘Well, I think you have to learn how to manage your boss. [The new managing director] is quite interesting in terms of being quite aggressive and volatile - he can be quite hard to work for. I have learnt how to talk to him and handle him.’

4.4.3 Distance and Upward Communication

Research has suggested that social distance is essential for leaders if they are to retain their influence and respect of their followers (Shamir et al., 2007). This distance may be physical, hierarchical, social and/or psychological (Collinson, 2005) and impacts on the internal communication of the organisation. Employees would seem to have a psychological need to have a certain level of closeness with their leader in order to attain the comfort level necessary to communicate openly with them. More often than not, however, the distance is primarily physical; most employees in big organisations do not get to have access to the highest leader of the organisation. With the exception of Organisation C, where the Managing Director is reputed to walk around the company often and talk to the employees, this would seem to be a problem with the other three organisations.

In Organisation B, a manager admitted:

‘Emmm, all I could say about senior management, I think they are very far removed from the rest of the staff’ [B18-M-II-TM].

The empirical evidence of this project reveals that employees communicate openly with the line managers they perceive as being close to them, not just physically but also psychologically, compared to the leader of the organisation, the CEO or the Managing Director. As Participant P13-F-II-TM said,

‘I am comfortable speaking with [line manager] as we know each other very well. We really are a good team. Further up – I would be careful with [the Managing Director] but I think that’s just a healthy respect for his position. Still, he would still be my last port of call...’

In Organisation E, this sentiment was echoed by Participant E19-M-III-TM,

‘If I have a problem I know I go to [my line manager]; no problem at all. She is very supportive of what I do and believes in me...Well all three of us are in the same office so we can communicate well. We discuss stuff about two or three times a day whether it directly relates to you or not. She [the line manager] is very open and shares what’s going on.’

However, it is also apparent that it is not merely physical proximity that can influence upward communication; physical closeness needs to be accompanied by a modicum of empathy in order to be effective. As Participant E15-F-II-TS explained of Organisation E, where many employees complained that they hardly ever saw the CEO,

‘We hardly ever see the CEO. Apparently [the CEO] is now coming in once a week [to this office] but that is so clinical. It would be much better if he popped in when he felt like it and just walked around chatting to us.... but he doesn’t feel comfortable mingling with us. It’s all a bit stiff and stilted...’

The interviews suggest that even a distant and arrogant leader can be seen in a favourable light to communicate with, when physical proximity exists,

‘I feel that [the CEO] is an accessible boss... but I know some people don’t feel that way. They say he is so arrogant... But you see, I just sit across from his office and I see him all the time, so he chats to us every day and so he is accessible to us. People in the other offices, for example, don’t see him so they don’t feel he is accessible or they would want to talk to him.’ [E14-F-II-TS]

Observations of closeness and distance from leaders were articulated in different ways by many employees,

‘He [the Managing Director] says communication is a two-way thing which of course it is... He says he is available in the [city] office but no one ever talks to him because they don’t see him as much. It’s human nature – you will be more comfortable with someone the more you see them. I know he is making an effort to be there – but although he says hello, he doesn’t ask about your work or even get interested.’ [E12-F-II-TS]

Similarly, this perception was also expressed from an employee at Organisation P,

‘It [communication with the Managing Director] is frustrating ... at times you feel you could do with more time with him. He is out doing the politicking and strategising, which is fine... but the people here would appreciate a bit more time I think....It’s just about having the time and the access to him – that’s not there.’ [P4-M-II-TL]

Physical proximity would seem to be more important than psychological or emotional proximity as a lever for open flows of upward communication,

‘I would just tell him [manager at fire station] straight. No problem. I wouldn’t feel hesitant in approaching him. But I am lucky as I share the office with him. It’s more comfortable for me. I would feel less forthcoming going across to the terminal because it’s the MD and senior managers there that I am not dealing with very often. I feel it must be horrible for the staff there because they are working directly with [the Managing Director], dancing to his tune’ [B23-F-III-TL]

Therefore, physical proximity between the employee and the leader would seem to be one of the essentials of good upward communication.

Excessive physical and social distance may impede the development of trust. The distortion of upward communication inevitably results from this distance (Fenn, 1965). As a point of interest, in a story building on Shamir's (1995) arguments on the differing extents of influence of leaders who were close or distant, Yagil (1998) found that the attributes of Israeli soldiers differed according to whether leaders were close or distant. Close leaders had the advantage and were seen as more realistic and approachable by nearby followers who typically valued leaders' proximity. A director at Organisation B, Participant B31-M-I-TS, explained,

'I would say remaining silent is less of a factor with my immediate subordinates. I feel comfortable that they will talk about it or I will draw it out. I don't have any anxiety there. Further through the subordinate channel there is less familiarity, people might be more guarded about what they say.'

Similarly, the researcher found that employees were more comfortable and at ease talking to their line managers rather than members of top management, as the following remarks would emphasize,

'It's like being governed by an iron fist....They [management] don't have the ability to manage people properly. They want something done and want it done now. No questions. No, I would not talk openly to the Managing Director, just my line manager.' [B21-M-II-TM]

'The MD is awful smarmy. Insincere... Yes, he doesn't give a monkey's. My line manager is a good, sincere man and I respect him and would have no hesitation in talking to him.' [B33-M-II-TM]

'Yes I would bring up any critical issue with [my line manager]. I think because of the proximity I have with [my line manager], she is always there to talk to and will take time to listen to you. It can't be this way with the big boss, even though he thinks he's inspirational... because it's not like that anyway...' [E18-F-II-TM]

'The MD will say my door is always open and I think he means that. But personally I would think he would be too busy to bother with it and I would go to X (the line manager) But I am sure if you did approach him he would be nice about it. He is very aware of everything that is going on.' [C30-F-II-TS]

‘I trust him [line manager] and I hope he trusts me... I can’t say I feel the same about top management.’ [B18-M-II-TM]

‘Certainly in my position I get a reasonable response from my line manager but then there’s a layer above that and another above them... and that can be more difficult. You can only go so far – there’s a natural barrier to this kind of feedback from us. And at the end of the day they [management] make the decisions.’ [C15-M-II-TL]

However, the empirical evidence revealed that sometimes, employees have problems with their line managers and need to step over them to approach the higher manager, a process that Kassing (2007) called ‘circumvention.’

‘If I really felt strongly about something, I don’t know if I would go to my direct superior. Had some bad experiences there and I don’t trust him anymore... I would rather take it to the Operations Director, a level above him...’ [B27-F-II-TM]

Sometimes the line manager lets his or her employees down and faces the consequences of losing their trust. The Communications Manager of Organisation E is not respected or liked by her immediate staff. As a senior manager ventures to explain,

‘[The Communications Manager] is inaccessible, in other words she is worthless because she has been forced out, sidelined, partly by the staff....She became distrusted, as anything she was involved in, she reported back and distorted it to senior management. Well that was the impression the staff had anyway. So she became a barrier, a peril...to the flow of upward communication. She’s not a very credible figure or much respected either, even now... and although she is the Communications manager, nobody will go to her... [E15-F-II-TS]

When the leader is distant, metaphorically and physically, upward communication suffers and impression management behaviours are rampant (Collinson, 2005). Furthermore, the distance between leaders and followers could lead to employee

opposition or what Kassing (2001) called 'dissent.' This stems from a disturbed and dislocated connection with the leader,

'I don't think they [senior management] have an accurate picture of employee perceptions. Sometimes, he [the CEO] acknowledges me, but very rarely and briefly.... I try not to communicate with him if I don't have to. He is up there... I won't talk to him other than just saying hello... but only when he says it to me.' [E17-M-III-TS]

On the other hand, the opposite can occur. Collinson (2005) researched an organisation where the CEO established a personal rapport with the shop floor workers and so won their trust. A similar situation exists in Organisation C, where the Managing Director is extremely respected and perceived as an approachable leader. In this kind of situation, upward communication flows spontaneously and authentically, uninfected by any impression management or ingratiation, as the following words from its employees illustrate,

'I have had cancer in my breast and was told I had to go for tests for the third time. They did a biopsy and I had to wait for a while. It was a difficult time but the MD stopped in the office and enquired about me, and how I was doing and my family too, if he could do anything to help...which I thought was very nice.' [C24-F-III-TL]

'I respect him a lot (the MD). He is always around and always has time to stop and speak to everyone, even casually. He always asks about my son.' [C32-M-III-TL]

'I first used to be in great awe of (the MD). He is so big and tall... I have realised now that (the MD) is a gentle giant, a very fair, kind person... once you get to know him. Nevertheless he has the strength and the drive to be at the helm and yet he is such a very kind, thoughtful man ... He is to be immensely respected.' [C32-M-III-TL]

In Organisation B, a similar kind of regard, that lead to open flows of upward communication were apparent for many of the line managers, but not for the Managing Director :

‘He [line manager] always takes time every day to say hello and remembers what you’ve been doing. Yes, and he is like that with everyone... Even his [the line manager’s] emails are friendly and appreciative. If he asks you to do something you are happy to help. That’s how it should be of course. And we feel we can approach him for things... He trusts us.’ [B30-M-III-TL]

In Organisation B, employees had expressed a very positive, warm regard of the Financial Director, who was soon retiring. They trusted him and communicated openly and honestly with him. The reason for this is expressed best in the following words of the Financial Director [B8-M-I-TL] himself,

‘I never ever feel that the word manager or director is necessary for me. My colleagues are my friends. I am not better than them...’

Similarly, another senior manager at Organisation B, also regarded with affection as a ‘mate’ by his employees, who were therefore frank and open with him, said:

‘I think one of the reasons that I can be quite open and encourage openness with my boys is that I do actually know what goes on. I know exactly what it’s like to do the job because I did it for many years myself at every level. So I can appreciate things from their point of view and not just from a manager’s point of view.’ [B11-M-II-TS]

4.4.4 The Romance of Leadership Theory

Mayo and Pastor (2007) focused on how leadership is embedded in the social networks created by followers and exists in the social psychological bases underlying the romance of leadership theory (ROL) and Meindl’s (1990, 1985) social contagion model of charisma.

According to Miendl et al., (1985, 1991), leaders are important because of what they represent in the minds of the subordinates. From this perspective, ‘leadership is an ideology that emerges in the minds of the followers’ (Mayo and Pastor, 2007: 96). Subordinates romanticize the notion of leadership and this shapes the manner in which they communicate with their superiors. The following young employee of Organisation B had met the Managing Director briefly and superficially and yet, was suffused in an afterglow of awe and admiration,

‘I don’t have a problem talking to the Managing Director, not at all..... when I first started I got introduced to him. So I have spoken to him maybe just two times. He’s fab. I think... He’s just great....’ [B5-M-III-TM]

Similarly, another new employee [P5-M-II-TS] of Organisation P said:

‘The founder of this company is an inspirational character. A real thinker, a motivator... So I have heard; I never met him though...’

On the other hand, the researcher believes that this is a doubtful issue. It is almost as if the employee needs to have an emotional, romantic notion of the leader of the organisation, a factor that is amplified by the distance from the leader. And yet, the pragmatic need for the employee to feel close to the leader, to be able to see, talk to and hear him or her, as part of the patina of everyday working life, is, from the empirical evidence obtained, one of the building blocks of open upward communication. Nonetheless, the romantic concept of the leaders, spawned by the distance from them, and over the course of time, can mutate into feelings of cynicism, distrust and estrangement, as the following quotation suggests.

‘A lot of the staff doesn’t see him [the Managing Director] that often ... and they have a feeling of distrust because they don’t see him on the floor’ [B27-F-II-TM]

4.4.5 Networks

Tichy, Tushman and Frombrun (1987) have distinguished between instrumental and expressive networks; instrumental frameworks are job and work related and expressive or friendship networks are based on trust and friendship. The pulse of upward communication is inclined to be spontaneous in the expressive network and probably be more muted in the work related instrumental one.

This may be illustrated by following words of Participant B33-M-II-TM; in Organisation B, instrumental networks guided the tone of the upward communication,

‘His [the senior line manager] management or communication skills aren’t the ones I would use. Personally I wouldn’t act the same way in his position. It’s about trust. The guys don’t trust him. But...you need to spend time with the people you work with. You don’t have to go out for a drink every night, just some time when you can. He likes to hobnob with the high and mighty I think. But I would rather mix with the guys. So they talk to me openly...Some of the senior managers across there don’t know how to treat people civilly.’

The value of expressive networks is also apparent in the next quotation from Participant B30-M-III-TL of Organisation B,

‘Well, there are four duty managers and I have known them all for over 10 years, so have worked with them at different levels and we have a very good rapport. We go out sometimes for a drink....They are the managers, my bosses but they know me and they know that they can leave me to make decisions. I know too that if I needed time off or had to discuss a confidential issue with them, I could talk to them about it. But it’s a two-way thing - I try to help and contribute and they reciprocate...But it is not the same with the new Managing Director.’

The climate of Organisation C is characterised by many social events, company organised holidays and shopping trips abroad for its employees, charity events and informal evenings at an adjacent pub. Expressive networks dominate the ambience of

the company and therefore, upward communication flows openly. As Participant C11-F-II-TS said,

‘I first met him [the MD] sitting beside him at one of the dinner dances. XX [the MD] was easy to talk to and approachable and I still find that. And then I met him at this [charity event]... I would always feel his door was open. I feel I could talk to him openly... I don’t find him distant at all, just the opposite...’

As the Managing Director of the organisation explained:

‘I think the staff do appreciate that we try to look after them. I think they do know we will go out of our way to accommodate them in many different ways. There is money provided for outings and social events and so on... it is like family in a way although we have grown bigger every year. Our culture is like that...’

4.4.6 Thoughts On Leadership

This section has a fleeting look at the different kinds of leadership that exist in the four organisations and how it impacted on the upward communication within the companies. However, the issue of whether it is the leader or the employee who sets the impetus of upward communication in the organisation is, in essence, somewhat naïve and simplistic. Certainly, in the case of Organisation E, this was indeed a relevant issue because the employees appeared to be wary and guarded in the company of the very egotistical, arrogant CEO. In the case of Organisation C, with its very benign, paternalistic and respected Managing Director, it was not.

However, the researcher argues that circumstances particular to the organisation, beyond the character, personality, remit and behaviour of the leader or the employee, also impact powerfully on the flow of upward communication. In Organisation B, for

instance, downsizing had a profound impact on the pulse of upward communication from the employees. In Organisation P, communication flowed well despite the often mercurial disposition of the Managing Director. This was because of the spontaneous creativity that characterises the communication of an innovative organisation, an undisguised respect for the Managing Director's decision making skills and also because of the special culture the founder of the company had instilled in the company before it was assimilated into the mother organisation.

From the empirical evidence in the preceding sections, it is evident that the Managing Director of Organisation C is a well loved, highly respected leader; his employees communicate with him honestly and spontaneously. Despite his tremendous success, the Managing Director of Organisation B is regarded with dislike and suspicion; his employees feel they could not realistically be expected to communicate with him openly. He is perceived as a ruthless leader, who was working hard to make the organisation a resounding success and so use this as a springboard for his own personal advancement and promotion. On the other hand, the Managing Director of Organisation P is a leader who is struggling to escape from unflattering comparisons with the charming and charismatic founder of the company. He is regarded as irritable and cantankerous, and much unskilled at communication. As he admitted,

‘That’s my failure here. I cannot position myself. I can sell things, do things, but can’t sell myself. But I am trying hard now...’

However, he was respected and appreciated for his direct approach, his business acumen and his swift and canny decision making skills. Furthermore, his employees

and managers had come to know how they could handle his temperamental moods and timed their communication to him accordingly.

The CEO of Organisation E, on the other hand, is an ambiguous contradiction in terms; a blend of vulnerability, introspection and self-disillusionment, juxtaposed with immense sincerity and great vitality and strength. The research now examines how many of his views are often tinged with the automatic vigilance effect (Pratto and John, 1991, Barber, 1983) or the self efficacy bias (Bandura, 1997), but which also reveal a brilliant, honest, straightforward man,

‘I expect people to be honest and I will be honest with them. I hate gossip and whispering secrets and, especially, dishonesty. There’s no way back from that for me. I am pretty forceful – I have clear views of what is right and wrong.’

However, his authoritative manners intimidate his employees into a state of paralysed upward communication and his awkward behaviours let down his exceptional ideas and fine values. As an employee [E19-M-III-TM] said,

‘His [the CEO] mannerisms possibly intimidate people but he possibly isn’t even aware of that. I haven’t had that much direct contact with him. But I am sure he doesn’t mean to – but he does [intimidate]! But it’s sad that people perceive him in that way... I try to be observant and cover myself; I am taking no chances ...’

Another employee [E15-F-II-TM] ventured,

‘He [the CEO] is quite arrogant in meetings – his mannerisms, even the way he sits in his chair. He doesn’t compromise at all.... It’s effective in business maybe, but not good for building relationships. I think he is more relaxed in a social setting, at Christmas dinners and all...’

The CEO [E3-M-I-TM] was hurt and shocked by the [confidential communication document] that revealed many lacunas in the communication of his organisation,

‘The thing that really shocked me was the suggestion that there was a secretive culture here.... They [the employees] said, decisions were made in secret – I found that difficult to understand... I put a lot of effort into making this an open organisation with good accessibility.... including the management accounts...’

However, the loyal deputy of the CEO was protective of him and defended the way he was often misunderstood by his employees,

‘When he (the CEO) is given the opportunity to show what he can do, he can do that – he is very good at what he does but doesn’t always take the opportunity with the staff. He is very knowledgeable and very political and is a good ambassador. He has had to work hard to get the staff to see where he’s at. He is very open and sincere, but it doesn’t always come across...’

It is possible that once employees and managers get to know the CEO personally on an individual basis, his sombre reputation is dispelled and they will begin to relate to him better. As he shared an anecdote,

‘Recently I was aware that one of my colleagues was very critical of the organisation in many respects. We had lunch and a very frank discussion about it. I appealed to his better nature. He now comes to me with things... to talk ... to straighten out... He seems to have taken to that now. And I appreciate it too... You have to get behind the personality issues.... He thought I was going to sack him when I invited him for lunch but I assured him that in that case I wouldn’t have wasted money on lunch!’

The CEO believed that he had a participative style of leadership, although his employees did not share this perception and regarded him as high handed and autocratic, which led to stilted and fractured flows of upward communication in his organisation,

‘My leadership style is one of participation. I like people to be involved in the processes that affect them. My view is simple – there is a deal on the table between us with rights and liabilities on both sides. If both parties deliver their obligations we will all be happy... I believe in getting things done...The whole organisation is structured around the principle of trust between us. I trust them to do their jobs and, if they do it well, they will have concluded

their part of the bargain and have nothing to fear... Maybe I am perpetually schizophrenic... but shouldn't they [the employees] get on with their lives...'

The leadership of an organisation therefore does impact on the course of upward communication. Quite simply, truly participative leadership facilitates and encourages its flow and despotic or autocratic leadership stifles or chokes it.

The next section proceeds to expand this premise and examines the influence of power and authority on upward communication, ingratiation and impression management.

4.5 Ingratiation and Impression Management

*'If we so want to, we can live in a world of comforting illusion...
Conformity is the easy way, and the path to privilege and prestige;
Dissidence carries personal costs.'*

Noam Chomsky (1992)

This section of the analysis examines the variables of impression management (Goffman, 1959) and ingratiation theory (Jones, 1964), their uses as upward influence tactics in upward communication, and how this may impact on career success. The responses of the superordinates to these tactics are also explored. The implications of LMX are also considered.

4.5.1 The Presentation of Two Analogous Theories

'People have to like you first. Then you can get them to do what you want.'

These words of an oil engineer from Organisation P express the essence of the sentiments behind the theories of impression management and ingratiation; people do things for other people, towards whom they are favourably predisposed. Impression management (Goffman, 1959) and ingratiation theory (Jones, 1964) are comprised of behaviours that are widely used in daily life. These behaviours are universally human and are used consciously or not in many interpersonal interactions, such as when the subordinate communicates with his or her supervisor. They were intuitively recognised, empathised with and endorsed by many of the participants.

As a fireman from Organisation B exclaimed,

‘Looking at this list (the Table of Influence Tactics) I would say there’s no one who could honestly say they haven’t seen these things happening sometime or the other, or done these themselves ...’

Participant B22-M-II-TM exclaimed when he studied the behaviours on the Table,

‘Oh yes, I know all of these....In laymen’s terms, arse-licking, brown-nosing. Absolutely, yes! It’s part and parcel of being in the job.’

The Human Relations manger of Organisation B agreed, using slightly different terminology,

‘All of the above! (Tactics in the Table) Of course! Been there, done that, seen it being used...It’s quite a normal way to communicate to slightly emphasise, make it sweeter, go along with the boss and remain quiet....’

A fireman at Organisation B said,

‘What I see here [the behaviours in the Table] is bang on really. I do them too and can see examples of each of them all the time, the conformity stuff specially ...’

4.5.2 Common Constructs

Impression management is the endeavour to sway the perceptions of other people by manipulating information and perceptions in social interactions, directed towards the achievement of a specific objective, through self-presentation and conformity (Goffman, 1959). From a communications viewpoint and in an organisational setting, the goal is for employees to present themselves in the manner in which they would like to be thought of by the individual they are interacting with. Ingratiation theory (Jones, 1964), which is an offshoot of impression management (Goffman, 1959) refers to a set of tactics that are used by persons to gain approbation of other persons who control significant rewards for them (Tedeschi and Melburg 1984). Ingratiating actions are considered illicit because the ingratiator presents himself as a party to one

kind of social exchange – ‘with one set of terms and conditions, while in fact he is primarily involved in another kind’ (Jones 1964: 11).

This thesis will analyse the two analogous theories of impression management (Goffman, 1959) and ingratiation theory (Jones, 1964) concurrently. This is because they share common tactics like self- presentation and, in particular, the tactic of opinion conformity. However, it must be pointed out that researchers have exposed a few finely tuned differences between these two theories. Wood and Mitchell (1981) maintained that impression management was used for defensive purposes, whereas ingratiation attempts are often used assertively to attain future rewards (Tedeschi and Melburg, 1984).

Moreover, Goffman (1959) projected self-presentation as a benign social behaviour used to portray oneself in an advantageous or favourable light. Alternatively, Jones (1990) maintained that such interactions could be detrimental to the emotional well being of the actor, the subordinate, because it might involve ‘selective disclosures and omissions, rather than blatant deceit or dissimulation’ (Jones, 1990: 175). Hence, Jones (1990) maintained that ingratiation can be taken to be a self - presentational strategy, like impression management.

On the other hand, Westphal (2007) maintained that self-promotion or self-presentation needs to be treated as a separate construct from ingratiation (Jones and Pittman, 1982). Ingratiation enhances interpersonal influence by engendering positive

affect, whereas self-promotion involves attempts to influence performance judgments (Godfrey et al., 1986; Stevens and Kristoff, 1995).

Nonetheless, this research will, in the interests of practicality, analyse the ingratiation and upward influence tactics employed by the 105 participants interviewed as they communicated with their superordinates, as an amalgamated construct. This is because, when the interviews were conducted, in the interests of keeping concepts simple and comprehensible for the participants to grasp swiftly, the different facets of impression management and ingratiation were packaged into a composite list of upward influence behaviours, set forth in a Table of Upward Influence Tactics and used as a visual prop to probe if, how often, why and when these behaviours were used by employees while communicating upwards.

Indeed, the theme of employee silence (Milliken et al., 2003) was also mentioned in this Table. This was because the researcher wanted to probe whether silence could also be interpreted as a passive form of opinion conformity.

It needs to be noted that the focus of this research is on the discursive and sense-making processes, whereby impression management and ingratiation are enacted, rather than its non-verbal components. Self presentation, as a tactic of both ingratiation theory and impression management, may include the actor's attire, manner, attitude, comportment, conduct and body language. These are behaviours that are not examined in this thesis on the dynamics of upward communication, which

restricts itself to examining the communication aspects of self-presentation, as listed in the Table, a facsimile of which is seen below:

BEHAVIOUR	DEFINITIONS
1. SELF-DESCRIPTIONS	<i>Descriptive statements made by the subordinate to describe himself/herself in a favourable manner that would make the supervisor think well of him/her.</i>
2. ORGANISATION DESCRIPTIONS	<i>Favourable descriptive statements made by a subordinate to describe the organisation he belongs to.</i>
3. OPINION CONFORMITY	<i>Expressions of agreement and conformity by the subordinate.</i>
4. ACCOUNTS	<i>A subordinate explaining an event or situation to his boss, minimising the severity or negativity of the event.</i>
5. APOLOGIES	<i>Admissions of blameworthiness for an undesirable event, coupled with an attempt by the actor to obtain goodwill from the superior.</i>
6. ACCLAIMING	<i>The subordinate publicly commending the superiors/ unit's achievements and successes, maximising their implications.</i>
7. OTHER-ENHANCEMENT	<i>Efforts by the subordinate to increase his or her credibility and likeability through the use of favourable evaluations of the boss's attributes.</i>
8. RENDERING FAVOURS	<i>Doing something nice for the boss to gain his favour and approval.</i>
9. REMAINING SILENT	<i>Deciding not to express a contrary or conflicting opinion and remaining silent/quiet.</i>

The tactics of and impression management (Goffman, 1959) in the Table are:

1. Self-Descriptions
2. Opinion Conformity
3. Accounts and story telling
4. Apologies

5. Acclaiming
6. Other-enhancement (flattery)
7. Rendering favours

The factors of ingratiation theory (Jones, 1964), in the Table, are:

1. Other –enhancement (flattery)
2. Rendering favours
3. Opinion conformity

It can, therefore, be seen that there are three overlapping dynamics in common in the two theories, namely,

- *Other enhancement*
- *Rendering favours*
- *Opinion conformity*

It therefore made sense that the two theories of ingratiation and impression management were not probed separately in the interviews, but that their tactics were combined under the label of upward influence strategies. This simplified the process of gathering delicate personal information from the interviewees. Furthermore, the act of presenting the upward influence strategies in a composite Table made particular good sense to the participants, as well as helping to diffuse the sensitivity of the subject. This research will now proceed to analyse the different facets of ingratiation theory and impression management.

4.5.3 Tactics

Research has established that there is a compelling relationship between the environment, person and behaviour (Bandura, 1977). The subordinate's perception of the organisational situation, which is usually linked to their own self-awareness, is the primary causal variable influencing his or her impression management behaviour. In the same way, the subordinate will make an assessment of the existing situation and the receptiveness of the superior to upward influence tactics. Participant E12-F-II-TS explained:

'They [management] say they want honesty but I don't know... I'd rather be honest, but you can be too honest. It wouldn't be good for you... You want to keep your job and get a good reference at the end of it. In any organisation there will always be the need to be tactful. I think opinion conformity specially and many of these tactics in your chart have their very good uses; it could be dangerous to put yourself on the line ...'

The trichotomous classification of influence behaviours by Wayne and Ferris (1990) are impression management tactics used to favourably influence the superordinate:

- ***Superior-Focused tactics*** are directed at the supervisor and are used to increase the affect of the supervisor towards the subordinate. As a young, woman employee of Organisation E said,

'I flatter the boss sometimes. Tell him, in all kinds of indirect ways that he is so cultured and cosmopolitan... and he likes it...'
- ***Self-focused tactics*** are intended to create the impression that the employee is a likeable person and are usually conveyed with body language such as smiling, touching etc. (Cialdini, 1989; Schlenker, 1980; Tedeschi and

Melburg, 1984). However, body language has not been taken into consideration in this research on upward communication.

- ***Job- Focused tactics*** are oriented toward the job or project in question, as the following quotation from Participant P1-M-II-TS illustrates:

‘But people do the enhancement thing in the sense that they want to make their projects look as if they’re progressing well. That’s natural. You want to describe your achievements favourably ...’

Similarly, Participant E4-F-I-TM said,

‘I have always loved working here. There is a huge amount of flexibility here and everyone is giving the chance to do the work they want to do. It’s really good ...’

On the subject of job and organisation descriptions, Participant C25-F-III-TL said,

‘I always speaking favourably about the organisation...Yes, but it’s a fact; a lot of people have had pride in working for the company and it’s a genuine feeling and it comes across often...’

The words of Participant E18-F-II-TM were an example of how organisation enhancement could be practiced even within the neutral milieu of the interview:

‘This organisation gives you fantastic opportunities, it’s great.... Some staff have even been to Milan, Ireland, Birmingham. The company really appreciates its staff and gives them these tremendous opportunities.’

4.5.4 Publicness

Research into upward influence tactics has suggested that a key factor influencing the saliency of public image concerns is publicness (Goffman, 1959; Leary and

Kowalski, 1990). The more public the behaviour, the more concerned the person will be about how he or she appears to his/her superiors. In the previous section on silence, this research pointed out that this variable of publicness also impacts on the dynamic of upward communication. A young security guard at Organisation B said,

‘If [manager] says something, people will agree and say, oh yes, yes, that’s the conformity thing.... Then when he leaves, they will say, well I don’t agree with that! It happens everywhere, at all levels.’

Northcraft and Ashford’s (1990) maintained that this happens primarily because employees have concerns about their public image. The following quotations illustrate the syndrome that many employees will practice ingratiation publicly but reveal their own true feelings privately with their peers:

‘I attended a big meeting with the [staff/management representatives] and they spoke up and said what management wanted to hear so I don’t know if it was sincere or not. Everyone has to think of their careers, specially at time like this.’ [B17-M-III-TL]

‘I have noticed that people pay him [the CEO] more respect when he is here than when he isn’t.’ [E7-M-II-TS]

‘Definitely I have seen that, opinion conformity... People who say something to your face, and something else to the boss... then say something different somewhere else...More like they will be more honest and blunt with me, but with the boss it’s different...’ [B5-M-III-TM]

Ingratiation is a powerful instrument which is driven by a basic human desire to be liked and accepted (Jones, 1964, 1990). Its first tactic, other enhancement or flattery, involves expressing favourable opinions and evaluations of the target person by the ingratiating individual. In the case of this study, this would be from the subordinate to the superior. The effectiveness of such a tactic stems from the fact that when a

person perceives that another is favourably disposed towards them, he or she tends to like the other individual in return (Wortman and Linsenmeier, 1997).

The second tactic, rendering favours, is often combined with the tactic of other enhancement and is based on the concept that the target individual will feel a sense of obligation towards the ingratiating individual, as well as see the individual as a helpful, pleasant and friendly person. Other enhancement has been regarded as an offering or as a present. Samuel Johnson (1750: 155) wrote, ‘Just praise is only a debt, but flattery is a present.’ The recipient experiences a social obligation. As Participant B9-M-II-TM exclaimed,

‘Buttering up? Yes. People use it all the time... I use it too for getting information from people. I’ll say well, you’re the real expert on this, praise the guy...and get all the information...’

4.5.5 Opinion Conformity

Opinion conformity is a tactic that is common to ingratiation theory and impression management. This is a highly significant theme in the research; it emerges as the most regularly used tactic of upward influence.

See Appendix 44: The Common Link of Conformity and Appendix 45: Pie Charts To Illustrate the Use of Opinion Conformity.

In a later and retrospective summary of a lifetime’s research in this field, (Jones, 1990: 178) concluded:

‘There is little secret or surprise in the contention that we like people who agree with us, who say nice things about us, who seem to possess such positive attributes as warmth, understanding, and compassion, and who would ‘go out of their way’ to do things for us.’

As Participant B5-M-III-TM says,

‘Yes, I exaggerate how much I like my boss and how much I agree with this decisions – It works well...I think everyone has to, for him to like us. Of course, I agree with what he says more than what I really do ...’

However, because Organisation P was an innovative, high-tech organisation, communication was fairly open and the use of ingratiation and impression management tactics was not warranted as much as in Organisations E or B, as the following remarks illustrate:

‘I don’t think [upward influence tactics in the Table] happens much here. People are usually very open when things go wrong. Maybe it happens a bit but I don’t think so. There is no blame culture here. If something goes wrong, we just try to find out why, fix it and move on We are an oil company and people are encouraged to speak up so that nothing important is hidden which may be important to the product....’ [P2-F-II-TM]

‘It’s funny because I don’t really recognise many of these. [upward influence tactics in the Table] used here with us.’ [P4-M-I-TL]

‘No one is reluctant to voice their opinion in this company, it’s not the way we work, if people don’t agree about the process, they will speak up ... and I think that’s true for [the mother company] as well as far as I can tell.’ [P6-M-II-TM]

‘No, I don’t see that (other enhancement) or flattery so much in our company...’ [P1-M-II-TS]

It is possible that these opinions from the members of Organisation P were to a slight extent, tinged with the self efficacy bias (Bandura, 1994), that is the natural human tendency to see ones own behaviour in an affirmative light. Nevertheless, opinion conformity stood out by far as the most frequently used tactic as the following remarks, across the board, illustrate:

‘Yes, sometimes I have done the opinion conformity thing and this too (exaggerated how much you agree with the opinion of your boss). It’s better to do that sometimes than get into a clash...’ [C26-M-III-TL]

‘Yes, opinion conformity, I see it a lot; I do it too, agreeing with the boss when you don’t really agree, humouring him...’ [C32-M-III-TL]

‘Well that happens definitely – opinion conformity. The most common of all these things I think. [C25-F-III-TL]

‘Definitely there is also a lot of opinion conformity. People don’t bother to raise objections....or they won’t be perceived as a team member... I think they have just learnt over time that it doesn’t work, making objections to the boss. That’s what happened to me, so now I know better.’ [P1-M-II-TS]

‘I have seen opinion conformity been used extensively here. People don’t argue with the boss!! I do it too, many times.... I think you know when it’s not worth arguing so you just accept it.’ [E10-F-II-TM]

‘Yes, I do this, [opinion conformity] a lot, I say I agree but I think it’s daft, but why should I bother to argue, after all [the manager] is the boss.... A lot of people here too probably conform – they say they agree but they don’t really...’ [E21-F-II-TS]

‘Oh yes, I do and I have seen [opinion conformity] but I’m not sure to what extent. We are told things ... and I might have questions ... so I just go along with it anyway...’ [E17-M-III-TS]

‘Yes, opinion conformity: it’s almost a natural reaction.’ [P13-F-II-TM]

4.5.6 The Fabric of the Persona

The personality of the actor has an influence on whether or not s/he chooses to use impression management and ingratiation (Premeaux and Bedian, 1993). Vecchio and Appelbaum (1995:87) argued that ‘personality is defined as the relatively enduring traits and dispositions that form a pattern distinguishing one person from all others.’

Premeaux and Bedian (1993), and Morrison and Milliken (2000), have suggested that that low self-monitors (that is, people largely unaware of their own behaviour and its impact on others), in comparison to high self-monitors (people highly aware of their behaviour and its impact on others), spoke up more often and used upward influence tactics less. Therefore, to a large part, the use of ingratiation and impression management could stem largely from the personality, character and authenticity of each individual employee. When the individual had a high internal locus of control (Ralston, 1985), there was relatively less need to use upward influence tactics compared to others with a relatively lower internal locus of control. Despite the data indicating that opinion conformity as an upward influence tactic was widely used by employees in the four organisations researched, not everyone employed it (or at least was willing to admit to its use, as the following quotations in the table indicate:

‘Self-descriptions – I have seen that used quite a bit. People marketing themselves. But I don’t do that myself. I prefer to let my work speak for itself.’ [P6-M-II-TM]

‘I don’t think I have done No.1 (self – description). I think people will find out if I am any good rather than me tell them ...Organisation descriptions – I enjoy working for [this company] anyway – the benefits are very good.’ [P2-F-II-TM]

‘If I go over there and they [line managers] speak rubbish, I will either switch off or I will tell them. They are no better than me.’ [B33-M-II-TM]

‘If I don’t agree with the process, I will say so. And I hope people are like that with me. That’s what I want. I want to know why...’ [P8-M-II-TL]

‘I have seen that, opinion conformity. Certain characters in this company do that a lot But it is not really my style, if there is anything my boss asks me about, and I don’t like it, I will say so...’ [P3-M-II-TL]

‘If my boss said something that I don’t agree with, I would disagree with him. I have known him a long time and we think highly of each other; he knows I have a lot of experience and he would want to hear my opinion. Whether he does anything about it is a different thing, of course...’ [C13-M-II-TL]

‘This is all alien to me, opinion conformity. At the end of the day what can you do. They can’t sack you because you don’t agree with them.’ [B30-M-III-TL]

Furthermore, proponents of self-consistency theory (Korman, 1970, 1976) argue that high self-esteem individuals are motivated to maintain a positive self-perception and continuing to perform at a very high level is one manner in which they can maintain behaviour that is consistent with their self-concept. When confronted with a task to perform, high self-esteem people value high performance, exert effort and engage in goal-directed behaviour. In addition, high self-esteem individuals are more likely to have higher self-efficacy than their low self-esteem counterparts (Gardner and Martinko, 1998), which contributes to higher performance levels under almost all role conditions (Bandura 1977, 1989). Furthermore, high self-esteem individuals are more strongly task-motivated, are less distracted by adverse work conditions and are more persistent when dealing with obstacles than their low self-esteem counterparts (Locke, McClear, and Knight, 1996). This study suggests that high self esteem monitors will, therefore, not feel the need to engage in ingratiation or impression management behaviours while communicating with their superiors as much as the moderate or low esteem monitors.

4.5.7 Age and Tenure

Similarly, many of the participants expressed the view that they used ingratiation and impression management less as they became older and became more their authentic selves, or as Ralston (1985) would have probably argued, when their internal loci of control grew stronger. Often, it is a combination of two factors which leads to an even

less need to ingratiate; first, the growing confidence of the employee that increases with growing older, and second, a longer tenure in the organisation. As with the variables of upward communication and silence, tenure and time are, therefore, additional factors in the use of upward influence tactics. The following insights of a number of employees highlight this phenomenon:

‘When I first started I used to apologise all the time then thought why am I doing that? I was younger then but, as I grow older, I don’t feel the need to do this...’ [P12-M-II-TM]

‘I used to do that [opinion conformity] often but I am trying to get away from that more now. As I have got older I am getting more confident. More so with the group of people I work with now. Before, other people would say what they think and personally I would sit and nod and not say anything... but I tend to say much more now. I hope I would speak up if I didn’t agree....’ [P9-F-III-TS]

‘I think when I was younger, and just come to work here, perhaps I used to do that [suppress critical opinions, opinion conformity] because I was scared to give my opinion to the boss.... when he said something I used to just agree....I think I suppressed things because I was concerned about how I would be viewed. Not now.... I am older and feel confident speaking up...’ [B27-F-II-TM]

‘When I was looking at your Table, it made me smile as I realised that I have employed some of them in the past but I am less inclined to, as I get older. Now I will snap back or just show it. But having said that, I can think of many times where I have seen profound expressions of agreement and conformity and publicly commending the superior’s achievements’ [B36-F-II-TM]

‘Yes, I have done the opinion conformity thing and I’ve used it myself but probably with other managers and in the early relationship but now I feel confident to give my opinion even if it doesn’t count for anything at the end of the day. Just so it is noted’ [B13-M-II-TL]

This was, however, one instance in the research where the use of ingratiation and impression management tactics did not decrease with becoming older and having a

longer tenure. In Organisation E, there was a distinct perception amongst its members that the CEO went out of his way to encourage the newly recruited, young, graduate employees to speak up, which they did; whereas the older employees felt they were not as supported by management and, therefore, used tactics of opinion conformity in their upward communications. Participant E12-F-II-TS said:

‘Opinion conformity here exists with older employees; not with the young, brash graduates that are the favourites of the CEO. Maybe there is a clash of cultures, as there are certain people who don’t conform and give their opinions, like the new young MBA ones specially. [The CEO] encourages them to be like this. Quite often, this makes them adversarial for the sake of it. That’s how it’s perceived by the other staff anyway. Then you have the other end – people who have been here a long time, who will totally agree with things, also for the sake of agreeing....’

The older employees were resentful of the fact that:

‘We take two graduates every year. There’s a perception that these are golden people! The CEO encourages them to speak and they sure do....’ [E21-F-II-TS]

There were more complications and blips in the interpersonal dynamics of Organisation E:

‘Yes, I have seen opinion conformity a fair amount of the time. ... you have a lot of middle-aged men here who have been very successful in the past and now find themselves in a subordinate position and they express displeasure privately... but they will conform to [the CEO].’ [E7-M-II-TS]

However, despite the data indicating that opinion conformity is an upward influence tactic that is widely used in the four organisations researched, not everyone used it:

‘If I don’t agree with the process, I will say so, specially as I become older.’ [P8-M-II-TL]

‘I have seen that, opinion conformity. Certain characters in this company do that a lot But it is not really my style, if there is anything my boss asks me about, and I don’t like it, I will say so, as I gain confidence in myself...’ [P3-M-II-TL]

'I have probably seen all of them all (influence behaviours in the Table)... You probably get them all at different stages and with different people. We all do different things for our own reasons.... but there are definitely a lot of people who will remain silent and conform to the boss's opinions by not speaking up because they don't want to get involved or confront things. I have seen that a lot. I am not one of them, I am just not ... I also know a lot of people will say they've done this and that to make themselves look good in front of the boss...' [E14-F-II-TS]

These comments might also be consistent with what is known of self efficacy biases (Bandura, 1994), which cause people to exaggerate the frequency of those behaviours that they deem to be socially acceptable or to have positive use value, while understating the frequency of behaviours that are held in disrepute (Sutherland, 1992). In addition, they are consistent with the heuristic or interpretive schema known as the availability bias, which postulates that those moments when we engage in exceptional and infrequent behaviours (e.g. conforming to the boss's opinions) assume a vividness in our memory precisely because of their infrequency, which in turn leads us to the mistaken conclusion that they occur much more frequently than they do (Dawes, 2001, Hayward, 2007).

4.5.8 Machiavellian Streaks

Machiavellianism has been identified as one of the traits of ingratiation, where a manipulative employee can secure enormous personal advantage from the superior by interacting with him/her, in a manner that has been carefully premeditated and scrupulously (or unscrupulously) crafted (Jones, 1964). Ralston (1985: 480) described Machiavellian type individuals as 'manipulative and having little care for the feelings or well-being of others.' Pandey and Rastogi (1979: 224) have argued

that employees judged high in Machiavellianism used ingratiation tactics much more often than those individuals judged as being low in Machiavellianism. Machiavellian persons are generally more manipulative, more persuasive and much more convincing than less Machiavellian persons (Christie and Geis, 1970).

However, in the 105 interviews conducted, although it became evident that the tactics of ingratiation and impression management were used in various degrees, as subordinates communicated with their superiors, no evidence of Machiavellianism was found. Or it might even be that the veiled Machiavellian participant was skilled enough to conceal his/her Machiavellianism from the researcher.

However, the value system of Scotland does not support or appreciate the use of overly contrived, devious measures used to secure personal gain (Craig, 2005), however Machiavellian they may be. For instance, even flattery can often come across as sham and therefore unacceptable. As Participant C16-M-II-TL said,

‘No I don’t think so - flattering the boss would not be good. If you did it, it would probably come across as fake.’

Furthermore, Participant E10-F-II-TM explained,

‘Other enhancement means flattering the boss or complimenting the boss. I must confess I am guilty of that!’ But I do this in an indirect manner; otherwise it would come across as fake...’

Or as Participant C6-M-I-TL said,

‘Yes, other enhancement – flattering the boss... I suppose it is a human thing, isn’t it... There is a bit of that, but in a very subtle way. It’s not arse-licking... just casually done...If done openly, it would be dishonest I think.’

As Participant C3-M-I-TM said,

‘I don’t think any of us are guilty of overdoing flattery – we don’t do that. It isn’t a Scottish thing. No.9... silence, happens as part of normal communication I think... and No.1 and No.2 (self and organisational description) but within reason. In a subtle manner, to keep our respect...’

4.5.9 Situational Variables

Ralston (1985: 842) identified three situational variables within the organisation that determined and shaped ingratiation from subordinates to superiors:

- the decision making style of the unit
- the ambiguity of the work task
- the scarcity of resources

The third situational factor leading to ingratiation behaviour, resource scarcity occurs when the resources of one group/team are controlled by another team, such as in Organisation B, where downsizing was happening. Pfeffer and Salancik (1978), Burke et al., (2000) and Vecchio and Applebaum (1995) have explained that as an organisation develops and changes, subordinates who do not have formal influence and power over their supervisors need to use other influence tactics in order to ensure that they receive appropriate rewards. Thus, they tend to increase their use of ingratiation as they communicate with their superiors, to increase their chances to reap more organisational recognition and rewards. This has been discussed in detail in the Section 7 on Downsizing. Morrison and Milliken (2000) maintained that resource scarcity is also one of the reasons for employee silence. As Participant B4-M-III-TL said,

‘I listen sometimes to how some of my mates suck up to these managers and it’s awful ... I try to tell her not to... She knows the situation – we are falling apart. I think why!? But I also know that she will be thinking about the

security of her job. I don't blame her in some ways, but it shows you where we are. I don't know where we go from here...'

4.5.10 Management Style and Ingratiation

Ralston (1985: 842) identified two basic supervisory leadership styles, autocratic and democratic. More recently, the same phenomenon has been critically studied by Kets de Vries (1991), who explored its sometimes pathological overtones. Others have pointed out that autocratic leadership can have a 'toxic' impact on the lives of followers (Lipman-Blumen, 2005), and can result in a hubris sufficiently strong to derail entire organizations (Hayward, 2007). Thus, autocratic managers tend to be very controlling and by the nature of their control, suppress employees' opportunities to expressive themselves creatively. Davis and Florquist (1960) maintained that a dependant subordinate will agree more with a bad-tempered, difficult supervisor than with a benign, benevolent and caring superior. The management style of the organisation and the personalities of top management therefore, impact on the upward influence tactics used by the subordinates. This was implicitly recognised in the words of two senior managers at Organisation B, even as they tried to dismiss the use of ingratiation and impression management tactics in the organisation:

'Yes, I have seen all these behaviours on your Table to a greater or lesser extent... but I believe they are ruled by the characters, rather than the circumstances...' [B6-M-I-TS]

'Yes, I have seen these behaviours but I believe the styles used are entirely dependent on personalities and specific situations...' [B1-F-I-TS]

Indeed, the autocratic style of the Managing Director of Organisation B has this effect on his employees and they believe they were moderating themselves with him by conforming and using a selection of the tactics used in the Table. Participant B7-M-III-TM said:

‘Maybe if [the Managing Director] would be approachable, you could probably tell him if you didn’t agree. But not with the way he is.... He would hold it against you. And we would then suffer...So, we need to use these strategies sometimes ...’

Similarly, Participant C12-M-II-TM said,

‘It depends probably on the boss. Some people don’t like to be argued with. If the boss is strong-minded and dominating, then the subordinate may not want to argue with them and it might be easier to agree and let it go... Another boss might be more open-minded and more willing to listen, in which case we will not need to suck-up.’

In Organisation E, the autocratic CEO, Participant E3-M-I-TM, expressed his irritation at the use of the tactic of opinion conformity, even from his senior managers,

‘I occasionally get strongly affirmative views from the management team, sometimes even from my senior managers, and always from the staff - almost as if they are trying to boost and reinforce my decision to do something a particular way. It’s maddening ...’

Amusingly, many of the employees of Organisation E shared this perception in reverse,

‘Our CEO has a very strong opinion about things and is very confident of his own views. To disagree with him would not be a wise thing to do. That means it’s easier for some people, and me too, to just say, yes, of course you’re right, yes, yes...’

Moreover, the personal character of the superior would seem to have an enormous impact on the manner in which upward influence tactics are used. In Organisation B, a junior manager explained:

‘With [the previous line manager] it seemed as though everything I said was picked up in some way. This ground you down in a way and then you thought, ‘I’m not going to bother saying anything.’ It’s confidence too – when you get put down for so long, you stop speaking up, just agree, agree, agree.... But when you start with someone else who brings your confidence out more, you start to value your own opinion more, like [the new line manager]... I think when I was younger, and just come to work here, perhaps I used to do that [suppress critical opinions, opinion conformity] because I was scared to give my opinion to the boss; when he said something I used to just agree....I think I suppressed things because I was concerned about how I would be viewed and a bit scared of the boss too. Not now I am older and feel confident speaking up. And I have a boss who likes me; he’s a great guy...So, I don’t have to do the silence or ingratiation thing with him...’ [B27-F-II-TM]

From the perspective of the employees, the superior’s reaction to feedback therefore, impacts on how much opinion conformity his/her subordinates will use when communicating with him/her. A young security guard at Organisation B chuckled and said:

‘Oh yes, he [former manager] liked you to agree with him all the time, because he got his own way then. He didn’t like it if you disagreed with him and would storm off in a temper. His face would go red with rage... So I decided to agree... whatever ...’

In a similar vein, Participant E15-F-II-TS explained:

‘I have done it [opinion conformity] before, many times and exaggerated how much I agree with the opinions of the [parallel line manager] to avoid his anger; he can get very angry sometimes...’

However, Moravec et al., (1993: 77) maintained that:

‘Open channels of upward communication create an environment of shared leadership ... [and] ... provide a framework for talking about everyone’s responsibility for pursuing the business vision. When employees give

feedback to the manager and the manager acts on the information, the employees feel that they are, in a sense, authorizing the manager to act as their leader and to represent their interests.’ Ingratiation then becomes a rationale that is passé.

This is the case in Organisation C, where the Managing Director has a participative style of leadership and where the flows of upward communication are open and honest and the use of opinion conformity is much less here than in the other four organisations, as the following direct quotes from its members illustrate:

‘I don’t think anyone does the opinion conformity thing too much here – we are all prepared to speak our minds.’ [C3-M-I-TM]

‘To a certain extent I would conform with [the line manager’s] opinion as I respect him a lot... unless it was something I really didn’t agree with and then I would say so as I have done in the past...’ [C11-F-II-TS]

‘Opinion conformity: people going along with the general consensus. I have seen that; I think it is there in all work places. But communication is good here, so maybe it’s not done not quite so much here...’[C15-M-II-TL]

‘Opinion conformity, yes, I think that happens a wee bit....’ [C17-M-II-TL].

‘If you need to say something you feel you can... but yes, the opinion conformity thing exists with a lot of people in the company, including me, it’s also nice and polite, isn’t it...’ [C18-F-III-TS]

4.5.11 The Reaction of the Superior

How does the target person, in this study, the superior in the organisation, respond to ingratiation?

A senior manager of Organisation B [B11-M-II-TS] said;

‘I think opinion conformity does come into it a lot. I get a lot of it...Some people just nod and say, ‘Great idea, Boss!’ Like Homer Simpson ... It always, ‘Yes Boss, Yes, Boss!!’ I hope I can see through it. I like to think I

can anyway; if I know someone well enough... whether I have their trust or they are just playing the game. So much of this has to do with trust. Trust is very important in relationships with people who work for you; it doesn't come automatically; it needs to be built up slowly...'

However, perceptions of ingratiation by different leaders of the same organisation can often be varied. The CEO of Organisation E, Participant E3-M-I-TM, said,

'Yes, they do exist here and it drives me nuts [opinion conformity and other ingratiation tactics]. I used to see a lot in the management team. I still see it a lot with my staff... We would have a debate and they would just wait for me to speak until I sorted them out my way. They wanted to know my views before voicing theirs... I think it was just uncertainty – they weren't sure I wanted them really to say what they think.... And they wanted to reflect my views exactly to please me...'

On the other hand, his deputy director, the Operations Manager, Participant E2-F-I-TM said, defensively,

'I ask people for their opinions and generally I believe they will not just agree, which is good, as I would rather get other views. I don't think people are afraid in the slightest to put forward different opinions or suggestions. So, I would say that there is not much opinion conformity here... or not many of the other tactics either, oh no, not at all ...'

Could this be accurate or was she also perhaps listening to the refrain of 'the sounds of silence' (Paul Simon 1967)?

Jones (1964: 162) argued that,

'While the precise nature of his reaction would be difficult to forecast, the average target of such potentially ingratiating gestures is likely to make some sign of gratitude or pleasure, often accompanied by an embarrassed disclaimer ... the motives of the potential ingratiator are rarely openly questioned. ... [The subordinate] usually receives immediate positive reinforcement for his ingratiating overtures...'

As George Bernard Shaw (1925) put it effectively, 'What really flatters a man is that you think him worth flattering.' For instance, Participant E19-M-III-TM said of the boss of Organisation E:

‘Yes, I have seen people flattering the boss.... It’s very subtle ...but he likes it very much when they do...’

Even in Organisation P, where influence behaviours are minimally used, a young employee said,

‘I have seen the senior managers feeling very happy when they are gently flattered....’ [P14-F-III-TS]

Sometimes, however, ingratiation can go wrong; the leader sees through the ingratiation attempt or begins to regard the ingratiating subordinate as scheming and manipulative. When this happens, ingratiating behaviour may lead to few or no benefits because the leader has come to see that behaviour as insincere or as an attempt to curry favour (Gordon, 1996; Jones, 1964; Vonk, 1998). Specifically, as Vonk (1998) and others have suggested, ingratiatory behaviours such as other-enhancement are less likely to engender reciprocal attraction when the target person attributes those behaviours to ulterior motives. Often, the whole endeavour of ingratiating can misfire and this can irritate the superior, as was evident in the words of Participant B9-M-II-TM, a junior manager at Organisation B,

‘I can see through it [ingratiation] but it’s difficult to tell them I can see through them... The whole dynamics of the company are not set up in a way that I can just tell them. I try to do it in an almost abstract way and make inferences to it but then I realise it’s not getting through – they don’t realise it’s them I’m referring to. It’s dreadful ... Or I think, are they really so thick-skinned they can’t see that I can see through them.’

4.5.12 Ingratiation and Career Success

The research of Judge and Bretz (1994: 54) argued that ingratiation predicted career success. However, Ayree et al., (1996: 107) demonstrated that ingratiation has no

significant effect on career success, as some aspects of ingratiation are a normal part of etiquette in many Eastern cultures. For instance, the giving of gifts and a natural respect for or deference to authority are normal and accepted aspects of Eastern customs and mores, where it is considered courteous and part of the norms of etiquette (Graham and Lam, 2003). Appelbaum and Hughes (1998), nonetheless, make the point that Ayree's (1996) study was conducted in the Far East and did not have great relevance to the norms of European or American culture.

In Scotland, however, with its distinctive culture, especially in the North East, overt flattery and the giving of favours or gifts as part of normal social business interaction, are looked upon as awkward and embarrassing, both for the giver and the receiver. The Managing Director of Organisation C, Participant C7-M-I-TL, has a balanced and realistic perspective on upward influence tactics:

'I think I have seen most of these [behaviours] in some form at some time or another, it's part of being human I think... But I am honest and open with them [employees] ... if there is a problem I wouldn't want them to hide anything. I expect them to be open and honest because I am the same with them. If I think they aren't doing something right, I will say so...'

Another director of Organisation C, Participant C3-M-I-TM explains,

'Flattery...Doing favours...Not in Scotland, not in the North East and even less in construction. We call a spade a spade in this part of the world. Your ego can take a bit of a dunt sometimes in this industry....'

Paradoxically, despite testimony to the contrary from many of the employees, the CEO of Organisation E, E3-M-I-TM said,

'No, I don't get any of that (rendering favours, flattery). It's not done here in Scotland... and they know it's not worth it!'

Similarly, opinion conformity sometimes loses its edge as a tactic of ingratiation or impression management; it becomes a measure of good manners:

‘Opinion conformity – oh yes. I do that too... but it’s polite to show you are listening and agree....it’s a nice gesture of affirmation and manners.’ [B27-F-II-TM]

Furthermore, on the tactic of opinion conformity, one of the Directors of Organisation C elucidated:

‘Opinion Conformity... It’s part of our culture really in Scotland... It’s more avoiding being rude. Trying to be nice, being polite... Yes, they [employees] do it with me and I know when they are doing it. It’s just being well-mannered I think... (*laughs*)... But they never let me win when I play them at golf anyway!’

In Organisation P, the Managing Director [P7-M-I-TL] would seem to agree that opinion conformity and acclaiming are sometimes used, to a certain extent, in the organisation setting:

‘I get very little negative feedback from the boys, which I find hard to believe ...I know I do have real weaknesses in my management style. I am looking for honest feedback. People might be doing a bit of acclaiming here... Opinion conformity too... I hope not. I do encourage them to speak up for the sake of [the product]. We’re too busy to think about it much...’

Participant P7-M-I-TL looked at the Table of Tactics and continued:

‘However....self-description - I don’t get a lot of that. Is it a culture thing because Scottish people are naturally against that...Other cultures, the Americans for instance, have a lot more to say about themselves and do a lot of positioning...I certainly see this attitude within [the mother company]...So, self-descriptions doesn’t happen a lot. Organisation descriptions - we have done a review and asked people’s opinions on the organisation and they were generally positive. Opinion conformity happens a lot. I think Accounts happens a little bit too. Apologies - When people get into that position here, they really take it on board... I have to get them to stop apologising - there is no such thing as perfection. Acclaiming - doesn’t happen much publicly but maybe privately a bit during the appraisals.

Rendering favours - I don't get that. [The Administrative Assistant] sometimes makes me a coffee but that's all...'

Nevertheless, Judge and Bretz (1994) argued that ingratiation is effective in obtaining career success because such tactics have been found to increase liking on the part of the supervisor, who begins to look favourably towards the subordinate and any upward feedback that is received. Participant B17-M-III-TL said,

'Actually in the fire service it depends how far the individual wants to go up the ladder. A lot of people have very strong views in the crew room, but hesitant to say anything in front of the managers, so yes, opinion conformity and remaining silent happen, like in your chart... Rendering favours – I wouldn't do it but I have seen people do it, some of them. I have seen certain individuals talking favourably about the boss in front of him of course... it depends again on what level you are, some people will agree it gets them further in their careers...'

Conversely, self-promotion (through self-descriptions) can be expected to lead to mediocre career success because these tactics decrease or do not increase liking. (Ferris et al., 1994). Thus, '... apple-polishing seems to be a better means of getting ahead than blowing one's horn' (Judge and Bretz, 1994: 59), or not, as the case might be. Participant B15-M-III-TM explained,

'Opinion conformity, and favours, and the enhancements...people are looking to curry favour. If they are looking for promotion, people are going to brown-nose. You can tell the people who are promoted on their own merit - they are different people. Their values don't change. They stay the same. But the ones who have arse-licked to get up there start to enjoy their power trip and won't gain any respect. So there's a big difference...'

As Participant B23-F-III-TL elucidated,

'We had another [line manager] earlier...she was very intimidating, very strict. And it affected how I spoke to her. If she told a joke and it wasn't funny, I would laugh. I used to agree with her even when she said daft stuff...But I'm not like that with [present line manager]. I don't feel I need to go anywhere from this position. If you are ambitious and want to move

forward it's different. Or if you feel your job is unsafe. If you are secure you don't need to do the opinion conformity and flattery thing...'

4.5.13 LMX

LMX (Leader Member Exchange Theory) asserts that leaders exchange their positional and personal resources for a member's performance (Graen and Scandura, 1987; Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995). This is particularly so in high quality LMXs, where leaders and members exchange high levels of mutual influence, trust, and support, and an internalization of common goals (Fairhurst, 2007). This can happen extensively in an organisation with democratic mores, as it has in Organisation C. There is extra-contractual behaviour by the members, coupled with a communicated willingness to exceed role expectations, which is recognised by the leader. Often, this recognition takes the form of input and influence in decision-making, valued task assignments, task autonomy, and leader support and attention (Graen and Scandura, 1987).

In low quality LMXs, such as one sees in Organisations B and E, there is formal authority, contractual behaviour exchange, role-bound relations, and low trust and support. Furthermore, in organisations with autocratic management styles, there is a high chance of ingratiation and impression management tactics being used by employees as they communicate with the supervisors, to leverage a better deal for themselves.

Research has suggested that compared to low quality exchange relationships, high quality relationships are related to more supervisor support, higher subordinate satisfaction, greater subordinate influence in decisions and lower subordinate turnover (Liden and Graen, 1980, Scandura, Graen and Novak, 1986, Vecchio and Gobdel, 1984). There are factors that can be closely linked to the comfortable, happy and satisfied ambience in Organisation C, where upward communication levels and the quality of LMX are high.

4.5.14 Summary

This section has looked at the impact of the different tactics of ingratiation theory and impression management on upward communication. Although all the tactics are seen to be used to a greater or lesser extent, the use of opinion conformity stands out significantly as the tactic used most often. Other-enhancement or flattery is also revealed to be used, although not quite to the same degree as opinion conformity. Section 8, on the impact of culture on upward communication and influence tactics proceeds to have a detailed look at how local norms and mores influence the use of ingratiation and impression tactics.

4.6 Power, Hierarchy and Size

‘Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will.’

Frederick Douglass (1841- 1964)

4.6.1 Hierarchy and Power

As Stengel (2000: 39) has said:

‘Status hierarchies are endemic in nature and in human societies of all kinds; and where there are status hierarchies, there is flattery, for flattery is a way of raising your status... Anywhere that there is what sociologists call asymmetrical relationships, there will be subordinates trying to ascend to dominant status. And where there is upward mobility, there will be flattery.’

Power differentials play an important part in the choice of communication strategies and in the choice of upward influence and communication tactics. Indeed, as Giacalone and Rosenfeld (1986) maintained, self-promotion, upward communication and upward influence tactics are positively related to the actor’s (the subordinate) perceptions of audience status and power. This is not the case in Organisation C, which enjoyed a very participative style of management from a leader who was greatly respected, the Managing Director. As Participant C18-F-III-TS explained,

‘He is an excellent boss to work for, our MD. All the directors here have a wonderful rapport with the staff. There is no division between the levels – there is no them and us. They respect their staff and that is returned. But the Managing Director specially is first class and a very genuine person. It’s seldom you come across people at that level who have these qualities. People here are very caring towards other members of staff. It’s like a family run business. In this day and age not so much of that exists now...’

Another director of the organisation said,

‘Yes I know I am a director but I tend to speak to everyone the same way. I think we are all equal; some people earn more money than others, that’s all....’ [C21-M-II-TS]

Hurley (2006) argued that employees decide whether to trust their leaders by conducting mental calculations based on factors they can assess, within the structure of the organisation. As can be seen in Organisation C, these factors include shared values (such as a strong work ethic, honesty, decency) and employees’ perceptions that their leader is dependable and competent.

On the other hand, in Organisation B, the widespread opinion of the Managing Director amongst the work-force was similar to the opinion of Participant B21-M-III-TM below:

‘It’s all about his [the Managing Director’s] power; there is no compromise ... they just show people who dare to speak up the door....In the short term it [Managing Director’s autocratic management style] does increase productivity, but it won’t be a happy environment. People are not happy here or even secure... I have said this to them [management] before and they don’t like it. They sometimes say - if you don’t like it, you know where the door is.’

Furthermore, the subordinates in Organisation B were very aware of the power and status differentials within the company, as the following quotations from the interviews illustrate,

‘[This airport] has always been a stepping stone, for the MD to move on to bigger and better things... If you look at the records I don’t think we’ve had an MD more than two or three years. In my 23 years, we must have had eight or nine MDs. They [the MDs] use it to launch themselves even higher... they use it as a training ground, they don’t care for anything but their high salaries.’ [B4-M-III-TL]

‘The culture here is supported by all these little symbols of the departments – different uniforms and restrooms and buildings. The managers are upstairs and the workers are downstairs. Reserved parking space for the bosses – all

that kind of thing means is that the hierarchy is too set, too rigid; you will never get it sorted out right here...' [B9-M-II-TM]

'As has been happening here, the management, with their high salaries and perks, don't care for those under them; like all private companies, they don't care about their employees, only about their shareholders. This came out in the recent staff survey. Employees here don't feel they have the same security as in the past.' [B21-M-III-TM]

'Even on the few occasions he [the Managing Director] will say, 'Well done!' it sounds false and condescending. It sounds forced and makes me feel patronised. Human relationships are very complex and he, in his drive to achieve things; he forgets the vehicle to achieving them is people. So if you don't have the relationship, they will do it through forced compliance or fear. After all, he is the boss and holds the power... People resent him.' [B36-F-II-TM]

As Participant B21-M-III-TM said,

'We are the little people in the company but it only takes little things to make us happy.'

However, it is the 'big people' in the organisation who decide whether or not this is going to be viable.

Townley (1993: 526) maintained that the techniques of the discipline of power 'begin with the distribution of individuals in space, locating them or fixing them conceptually.' As Foucault (1980: 223) had said, 'Disciplines characterize, classify, specialize; they distribute along a scale ... hierarchize individuals in relation to one another, and if necessary, disqualify and invalidate.' He identified three primary methods through which this is effected; first by an enclosure (the creation of a space closed in on itself), second, partitioning (each individual/employee has his/her own space and each place an employee) and third, ranking, (the hierarchical order of individuals). Townley (1993: 529) explained how individuals are classified and

hierarchically ordered along a scale in organisations: 'Job classifications and job ladders are ... rankings creating a hierarchy ... based on skill, responsibility or experience.' This is how power in the organisational hierarchy is conceived.

As (Giddens, 1981: 28-29) said,

'Power is an integral element of all social life and organisation as are meaning and norms...All social interaction involves the use of power as a necessary implication of the logical connection between human action and the transformative capacity ...Power within social systems can be analysed as relations of autonomy and dependence between actors, in which these actors draw upon and reproduce structural properties of domination.'

In Organisation E, an interesting sub-plot was exposed about the manner in which important mediators of the main source of authority acquire a power of their own. The CEO of the organisation spoke glowingly of his secretary, on whom he relied a lot:

'My PA is very efficient and reliable. And I delegate many things to her... Part of what she does is bring information to me that I wouldn't normally get...'

However, the employees of the organisation were obviously not impressed either with her efficiency, or her referent power. A young graduate of the company said,

'A couple of times lately she [the PA of the CEO] has sent out emails which have been very authoritative and it didn't go down well. But her role is strange and she is defensive about it as she knows how people perceive it. It's almost as she is an off-shoot of [the CEO].'

Georgesén and Harris (1998: 185) have noted, 'The relationship between power and persuasion is reflected in the definition of power as "the amount of influence that one person can exercise over another."' Indeed, the superior in the organisation enjoys power from the fact that he holds a position of power in the organisation. As Hargie

and Dickson (2004: 339) put it, ‘The power resides in position. The holder of the position is in authority.’ Mintzberg (1996: 63) argued, ‘...hierarchy is precisely what empowerment reinforces. People don’t get power because it is logically and intrinsically built into their jobs; they get it as a gift from the god who sits atop those [organisational] charts...’ As Participant E7-M-II-TS observed, ‘In any organisation, people will still see the boss as the boss...’

The empowerment of staff can appear difficult to a leader who has an authoritarian streak. This was quite obvious in the responses of the autocratic CEO of Organisation E. When asked about his style of leadership and the issue of employee empowerment, he responded:

‘We have been in danger in the past of drifting past the balance of encouraging good internal communication and encouraging a whinging culture. Individuals have confused consultation with democracy – and this is a benign dictatorship!’

Reflecting the view that such a sentiment goes beyond paradox and reaches into outright contradiction, his employees ventured to give their opinions about his style of leadership:

‘How about calling it a benign autocracy? You can’t lead by committee. [The CEO] says he listens to everybody and decides the course himself and then everybody should start paddling in the same direction regardless of what they believed to begin with.’ [E11-F-II-TS]

Within the organisation this feeling was widely echoed,

‘I think people are confused. The company is under pressure to perform and this puts pressure on everyone. This comes from the top, this pressure. They are the big bosses. It’s much harder at the bottom. There is a great pressure to achieve targets.’ [E7-M-II-TS]

‘You see, that’s where our organisation is vulnerable; it’s very much at [the CEO’s] whim. But he is just one guy and can make mistakes and has his own prejudices and passions, but is convinced of his own righteousness and power. That can be a weakness.’ [E15-F-II-TS]

Even in a small, innovative organisation, like Organisation P, power and its dynamics are issues as the following two quotations reveal. Firstly, the Managing Director of the organisation said,

‘But in our team everyone has their own speciality and they are experts in their fields and I am not an expert in any of them. I am a mechanical engineer but they are working with it day in and day out... whereas I have been a manager for many years and I have lost a lot of the skills they have. I rely on them to get on with the job and I just nudge them in the right direction. I co-ordinate them and help them get where they are going but in a lot of ways I don’t really tell them how to get there as a lot of it is their creativity. For instance, X [an oil engineer, namely Participant P6-M-II-TM, whose corresponding perspective is noted below by the researcher] and I have had our ups and downs but even if we have disagreed, we have always had a very open relationship. He has said he doesn’t like the way I am managing him and I will say that’s fair enough and we try to do something about it. Most of the boys are open in what they believe and will say it.’

Secondly, Participant P6-M-II-TM on the other hand, in his interview, had said,

‘Well, here I am working on a fairly straightforward line project, far simpler than some of the projects I have managed on my own in the past. But [my boss’s] management style is that he is the leader and I am the engineer, the underling... and he wants to know everything, wants to sign every purchase order. It slows the whole process down as he has to make the decisions I have already made. And it also de-motivates me. Although he is very inexperienced as an engineer, he still seems to want to impose himself and change the designs with me, an engineer who’s been doing it for 20 years. It can enrage you. He wants to make sure everyone knows he’s the boss but by making a change to the design when he doesn’t know much about it... is ridiculous. I am happy for him to be my manager – he is a good people manager and a really nice guy. He should be letting me use my skills to do what I can do but that is not happening. He needs to see the results all the time ...that’s playing power games I think...’

Jones, Jones and Gergen (1963) and Thibaut and Kelly (1959) referred to the power differentials between the subordinate and the superior as the *high dependence condition*. The subordinate's dependency on the supervisor is, therefore, significant (Leary and Kowalski, 1990). Evidence suggests that a high level of trust pays dividends for organizations, as in Organisation C. And yet, organizational dynamics can complicate trust judgments. The power differential caused by hierarchical relationships in organizations adds complexity to developing and sustaining trust relationships. In some studies, subordinates were able to recall more trust-related incidents than superiors, and trust violations were likely to appear larger than confirmations of trustworthiness (Tschannen-Moran, 1998, 2000). Indeed, this affected the ease at which they were willing to communicate with their superiors and impacted on their degree of organisational citizenship, as the following comments from the employees of Organisation B, with serious problems in upward communication, illustrate,

'But last week I was in a meeting and [the Managing Director] was there. He was making a point about me using the word 'staff..'. he thinks this has negative connotations. I disagreed. I was presenting something to the group and he kept interrupting and he was putting me down. That is a wrong way for a senior director to use his power and I do not respect him for this... I was quite annoyed ... I thought it was unprofessional to act like he did. Power games I say...' [B36-F-II-TM]

'I would say management does not have an accurate perception of how employees think and feel... I think there is possibly a lot of communicating down to people and not an awful lot upwards. They are very conscious of their status and position. There is a definite feeling of a big gap between them and us ... [B26-F-III-TL]

'They [management] just want to listen to the sycophants. If you have principles you won't make it here. That is difficult. I once went upstairs and said I couldn't get to grips with their complicated titles –These titles are so important to them, their high status... It's so gutless...' [B19-F-III-TM]

These attitudes may be contrasted with the attitudes of the members of Organisation P,

‘What power means isn’t going around telling everyone what to do. It’s about first knowing yourself and then knowing what kind of behaviour is appropriate in different situations. There are times when you have to be decisive, then again, when you have to be quiet and listen. Some of it I do instinctively but I was very weak on listening until six years ago. I would not sit back and observe group behaviour and encourage participation. I would tell them what was going to happen and this would destroy the dynamic of the group. Now it’s more hands-off and I really do a lot more delegation.’ [The Managing Director, Participant P6-M-II-TM]

‘There is no problem there (about employee ideas). Everyone is encouraged to put their point across. In our own section we try to advance and experiment and improve all the time. If anyone has any comments, we hear them to see if we can make things better. There’s always someone who is a bit odd now and again but that happens everywhere. But yes, it’s a good company to work for. But don’t tell them that, as they’ll think I just want a pay rise.’ [P14-M-II-TL]

‘I think that [delegation] is done by intelligent bosses and works with intelligent people, giving them the power and the responsibility. It’s the way it is done here...’ [P1-M-II-TS]

‘There is a lot of command and control stuff going on [at the mother company]. Not so much here with us... They [mother -company] keep discrediting us saying we are a small group. But we get great results...’ [P7-M-I-TL]

4.6.2 Size and Structure , Culture and Communication

The studies of Klauss et al., (1978) have suggested that both the metiers and size of the organisation influence communication behaviour. The most critical measure of size related to communication behaviour was the number of people reporting to the focal manager through the chain of command. As the number of subordinates reporting to a focal manager increased, effective communication appeared to decrease.

So, is size a significant factor in facilitating upward communication? In order to address this issue, the study proceeds to have a brief overview of the organisations.

See Appendix 46: Number Of Employees In Each Of The Four Organisations.

Organisation B is a large and extremely hierarchical company, part of a bigger mother organisation, with about 240 employees. Communication strategies have been launched to empower the workforce and make them feel part of the recent successful growth and profitability of the organisation. However, this endeavour has been severely compromised by the downsizing that is going on in the organisation.

‘The feeling is that there is no loyalty from the company and a lot of people feel that they shouldn’t be loyal back as they don’t know what’s going to happen. So it’s not a good environment.’ [B7-M-III-TM]

The toxic issue of downsizing has, nevertheless, not been addressed in any of the communication strategies of the Managing Director, and which has led to an ambience of distrust and cynicism in the organisation.

‘There is none, [upward communication] - because downsizing would be the biggest influence on that...and people are silent... they are so nervous of what is going to happen next... people don’t do it, communication I mean. It just doesn’t function. They (management) have downsized to a certain point where it (communication) no longer functions....with the insecurity and uncertainty that it creates, when you do wish to talk with your supervisor about a important issue, you think twice about saying anything. You don’t want to endanger your own situation.’ [B7-M-III-TM]

In Organisation B,

‘... there is a distinct feeling ... that there is us and them- the management and us. Generally it’s not one big happy family...’ [Participant B5-M-III-TM]

However, in the slightly smaller Organisation C, the situation was different. As the Managing Director said,

‘We try to get people comfortable so there’s no blame culture. They are backed up in what they do. We get to know their qualities and whether they can do things so I can put the right people in charge of the job. It also probably makes us inclined to have people who are comfortable in that environment... so this would frustrate very aggressive people. It’s a constant dialogue... We treat everyone with respect, even the most junior employee...’

Organisation C, of around 200 employees, has the qualities of a ‘family’ company. It does have a hierarchy, but unlike Organisation B, also enjoys a relaxed and open culture of upward communication. A noteworthy feature of this company is the participative leadership style of the extremely respected Managing Director of the company,

‘Staff feel valued and motivated here. You have your ups and downs of course, but on the whole, yes, communication flows and no problems with upward communication...The turnover of the staff is very low – people like to stay here....’ [C17-M-II-TL]

‘You spend more time with people you work with than with your family probably, so you have to know them along with them well. Here we all know each other and have the same value systems. We have a commonality of purpose and attitude to work. It’s like a marriage – you have a commitment. We have never wanted the normal power structures of other organisations – we wanted to keep going long-term and keep our staff. And the staff like that and give back the loyalty they get’ [C4-M-I-TL]

‘Everyone mucks in here. The management wants us to be more successful but that’s normal. But it’s a nice environment – no doubt about that. We are all working for the same aim...’[C21-M-II-TS]

However, many participants voiced fears that because Organisation C was expanding, there would be changes in the culture of the company:

‘There have been changes in the last couple of years... But there is still a hardcore of people who have been here for a long time. I don’t know what it will be like when [the Managing Director] retires..... I don think this special culture will last. I think people are coming in with new ideas but the feeling is different.’ [C15-M-II-TL]

‘Yes, it has a special culture but it’s getting bigger and it’s harder to know what is happening. It was easier when it was a small company.’ [C24-F-III-TL]

On the other hand, Organisation E is a medium sized, hierarchical organisation. As Participant [E13-M-II-TL] said,

‘It’s a weird place to work – not a very happy place.’

Although the organisation is not large, it is awkwardly structured because it was formed by the incorporation of four smaller organisations, which still remained geographically detached and situated in different part of North East Scotland. It has around 70 employees.

‘I used to work for the smaller organisation [the CEO] ran before the amalgamation ...and it was probably the best organisation I have worked for in terms of getting on with the work... Here that doesn’t happen. It’s too structured. The hierarchy... It’s clumsy. That’s the way it happened when all the trusts came together to form this one... And I think the company is so diverse geographically ...We have such a diverse group of people ... everyone has different ways they want to do things.’ [E8-M-II-TM]

The Operations Director admitted,

‘I don’t know the staff as well as I did when we were smaller. I am so busy with other stuff that I don’t get enough time to get to know the staff as well as I could.’ [E4-F-I-TM]

Internal communication is a source of conflict and dissension in Organisation E, according to an internal document on communication. However, a communication forum has recently been set up to address this issue. One of the difficulties here could be that the employees of the organisation are intimidated by the rather authoritarian style of the CEO. As Participant E15-F-II-TS said,

‘[The CEO] because he is up there, quickly forms an opinion of you and sticks with it. ... he can be very difficult.’

Participant E17-M-III-TS had a similar view,

‘[The CEO] is a good person maybe, although I do think he can be very difficult and awkward. Having the bigger organisation has got in the way in a sense. We are too big I think...’

The CEO was outspoken about his management style,

‘Someone has to be in charge and take the decisions. It is my responsibility. I am not interested in self-management or delegation. Ultimately it all comes back to me.... The employees here don’t get to vote and some of them have been confused there because although I do encourage debate and informality, the responsibility and the power rest with me. They think when I ask them for an opinion that I will always act on it? This is not so; I am the CEO I shift the balance back so they are clear it’s only consultation’ [E3-M-I-TM]

His employees were aware of this sentiment but were not appreciative of it,

‘I have often had the feeling that the staff is consulted for the sake of it. But that [the senior management team] have made up their minds regardless of what the employee feedback is.’ [E15-F-II-TS]

Organisation P is a small relatively flat, matrix, organisation, part of a massive mother organisation, an oil conglomerate. As Participant P6-M-II-TM said, ‘It is a pretty small company.’ It is an innovative organisation and its flows of upward communication are characterised by relatively open and direct communication; the idea behind this is that the product is so vital that nothing that is important to its development should be kept concealed. It has about 35 employees. Acknowledging that he had an unpredictable temper, the Managing Director said,

‘I am like a chameleon. But I delegate power and authority... I adopt different styles and step down from my perch as the boss... Sometimes the problems is in reverse.... The first manager we had had real difficulty reporting to me because I didn’t have a PhD. He had a doctorate and never gave me any respect...’ [P7-M-I-TL]

‘This is a small organisation; I don’t think there is an issue with internal communication here; we all know each other and we work together and communication is quite honest and open...’ [P14-F-III-TS]

'The place works well and we produce the product and we have an engineering meeting once a month and we discuss our projects...One of the great things of working for [the Managing Director] is that he does give you responsibility and stands back and lets you get on with it. He doesn't look over your shoulder – he leaves the decisions to you...' [P1-M-II-TL]

4.6.3 Summary

This section of the analysis has dealt with the ramifications of power and power differentials on the pulse of upward communication. The next section on Downsizing and Morale in Organisation B sheds further light on the subject.

4.7 Downsizing, Morale And Upward Communication

*‘All ambitions are lawful except those which climb upward
on the miseries or credulities of mankind.’*

Joseph Conrad (1857 –1924)

Drucker (2003: 122) said, ‘all organisations now say routinely, “People are our greatest asset.” Yet few practice what they preach, let alone truly believe it.’ He argued fiercely for the recognition of the social responsibilities of the organisation. Furthermore, many centuries ago, the economist, Adam Smith (1776), argued that morality was not an ethical absolute, but an active concern for the welfare of others. Moreover, Drucker (1999: 120) maintained,

‘It is futile to argue, as Milton Friedman (1912-2006), the American economist and Nobel-laureate does, that a business has only one responsibility: economic performance. Economic performance is the *first* responsibility of a business. Indeed, a business that does not show a profit at least equal to the cost of its capital is irresponsible; it wastes society’s resources. Economic performance is the base without which a business cannot discharge any other responsibilities, cannot be a good employer, a good citizen, a good neighbour.Unless power is balanced by responsibility, it becomes tyranny....So the demand for the socially responsible organisation will not go away, but rather widen.’

Nevertheless, reductions in workforces have been a noticeable trend in organisations over the past two decades (Tourish and Hargie, 2004). Different words for the same syndrome are ‘downsizing’, ‘rightsizing’, ‘rationalisation’, ‘de-layering’, ‘finding the right staffing level’, ‘achieving staffing equilibrium’, or ‘letting people go.’ This procedure has been defined as ‘an intentional reduction in the number of people in an organization and is accomplished via a set of managerial actions, which may include the use of hiring freezes, layoffs, and normal or induced attrition’ (Freeman, 1999:

1507). Ostensibly, the main organisational goal of restructuring is to create the lean, mean organisation and promote efficiency, productivity, and/ or competitiveness (McKinley et al., 2000; Cameron, 1994). Commenting critically on this phenomenon, Mintzberg (1996: 62) described it as ‘...the process by which people who barely know what’s going on, get rid of people who do.’

This section of the analysis proceeds to look at the effects of downsizing on employee morale and internal upward communication in Organisation B. As Participant B16-F-I-TS, the Deputy Human Resources Manager, explained,

‘At the moment, we have a lot of change management going on - people moving, including some compulsory redundancies. It’s a very uncertain time at the moment.’

On the other hand, the Communication Manager insisted,

‘This [downsizing] is not currently an issue for [the company]. However I have seen restructuring create fear, uncertainty and sometimes anger ... and so, I suppose, it could affect morale.’

Participant B7-M-III-TM summed up the impact of the redundancies on upward communication in the organisation,

‘There is none at all, [upward communication] ... because downsizing would be the biggest influence on that....and silence it because people are so nervous of what is going to happen next...But people don’t do it [communicate upwards]. It just doesn’t function. They have downsized to a certain point where it no longer functions...with the insecurity and uncertainty that it creates, when you do wish to talk with your supervisor about an important issue, you think twice about saying anything. You don’t want to endanger your situation.’

Participant B5-M-III-TM said,

‘They (senior management) do get told certain things they want to hear whereas I would tell them how it actually is. But there are people who don’t just conform, they distort their communication to them...or say it in such a way that it will not have any problems and this makes the MD very happy. They do it just to save their own skins in this situation.’

As Participant B4-M-III-TL emphasized,

‘Remaining silent is a big issue here...I see it so many times. When push comes to shove we say nothing. Can you blame us? Things are uneasy around here... [downsizing]. If one out of ten people has to go, if you are the noisy one, it will probably be you. We have seen too much downsizing, like X AND Y [names employees made redundant]. Specially X [another employee who was just made redundant]...you won’t find a better employee in a customer service industry and she is gone. Where is the logic? So, no one really speaks up here...’

He continued,

‘People are scared of it [downsizing]. Everyone is scared for their jobs. Security (the department) hasn’t had their turn yet but it’s coming eventually. Jobs will be lost in security. So you don’t want to speak out of turn and then be the one who has to go.’

Worrall and Cooper (1998: 8) maintained that

‘that the ‘business benefits’ of restructuring e.g. improved profitability, speed of decision making etc. are not completely evident to junior managers and employees; and, second, that the process of restructuring has had a negative impact on employees’ sense of loyalty, on morale, on motivation and (particularly) on a sense of job security.’

Illustrating this, Participant B27-F-II-TM elucidated,

‘I think it is fake to have this fantastic communication stuff and then people made to go.... My team is constantly wondering when the axe is going to fall because there has been so much movement over the past year – people are not finding out until they are called to the meeting and things change dramatically in 24 hours, although this has all been pre-planned. It’s all top secret until you suddenly find out. I think it’s a very uncertain organisation we are in at the moment. It comes from the top – our MD is a new thinker apparently. He is more interested in qualifications than experience. They are now taking in people with degrees but with no experience or background in the industry whatsoever. What about valuing experience and commitment and loyalty! These things that cannot be measured just by a university degree.’

On a similar note, Participant B7-M-III-TM sighed,

‘There is no procedure, no policy. [The company] still doesn’t have an official redundancy policy. They assess you ...They offer you packages and give people a chance to go. So how do you choose – it must be arbitrary. So, it could be people who speak up who are chosen to go. Oops! Sorry! There goes your head! So, people are scared – they sit in the meetings and say nothing then get outside and say what they really think. Everyone is scared for their jobs. So you don’t want to speak out of turn and then be the one who has to go.’

The ambience in Organisation B was disturbed, anxious and apprehensive. Upward communication had almost ground to a halt. The quotations above illustrate that this was directly affected by the downsizing process.

4.7.1 Share Prices and the Stock Market

In his discourse on organisational restructuring or downsizing, Byrne (1999: xiii) emphasized that Albert Dunlap, who built his career on ‘draconian downsizings’, understood how ‘the more a company fired, the more Wall Street seemed to applaud, sending a company’s stock price higher and higher.’ Similarly, the ethos of ‘jungle capitalism’ (Byrne, 1999: xv) resonates in Organisation B, where the alleged reason for downsizing is to cut costs, to repay the enormous loans that were incurred for the construction of a new terminal, the creation of which would, purportedly, add immense value to the share price of the holding company. As a member of the top management team of Organisation B [B11-M-II-TS] explained,

‘I can see that downsizing destroys the morale. But the reason for the downsizing is that the company finds itself in a unique situation at the moment. For the first time, we have now had to borrow money to invest because of [the new terminal]. This is the first time we have ever had to take a loan out to build the terminal and this is costing us just over £3 billion ... which is huge. So with that amount of debt and because people that matter

are a bit nervous about this debt, they are saying that as a blue chip company you have got to reduce your cost base... It's all around the share price. Further, the City (City of London) has expectations of our share price – this is for us to keep a good share price and this makes us a very good buoyant company to pay off its debt...So it's all pivotal around debt and the share price... Well, I think the company is probably willing at the moment to suffer the impact of loyalty... For many years we have never had the backbone to sack people. We would always redeploy and move them sideways. But that's different now.'

However, from the perspective of an employee of the organisation, a security guard, the perspective is somewhat different,

'Yes, I see a lot of arse licking or as you call it, the opinion conformity thing, when you go to these [communication workshops of the Managing Director]; they show you how great the company is doing. There are two pictures - one for the stock exchange but there is a second one for the employees. They can't give you too much of a pay rise and there will have to be cutbacks and redundancies - doom and gloom. But for the City, everything is rosy in the garden; profits are high, there is growth, the company is so successful... and we know that's the case because we read the papers.'

However, as Byrne (1999: xv) emphasized,

'But when shareholder value creation becomes not merely the highest goal, but the only goal, something else happens as well; organisations become committed to maximize short- term performance and to satisfy only short-term investors. Downsizing is taken to its illogical extreme, increasingly divorced from reality and economic sense and increasingly informed by personal animus, ego and greed.'

Is this what happened in Organisation B? Certainly, the organisation was flourishing; profits were up 30% in the last quarter. The organisation received a great deal of publicity in the local media, and was perceived as a highly successful, modern, well managed company, with a phenomenal rate of growth. However, was the incredibly dynamic and successful Managing Director of the organisation, led, in part, by his sense of self-worth to secure a future advancement for himself? As a Security Guard [B7-M-III-TM] said,

‘[The Managing Director] is a bean-counter. He sees the savings... We are simply financial units. If he [the Managing Director] has to get rid of eight financial units, he will. He doesn’t care who they are. He will take that opportunity and that’s his way to the top.’

Pfeffer (2005) has argued that too much emphasis on pleasing the financial markets is one of the causes behind downsizing; he cited the layoffs at Hewlett Packard as an example of poor human resource management, which produced fear and disengagement in the organisation. On the other hand, he pointed out, South West Airlines has never had a lay-off, even after 9/11, and therefore remained profitable and successful at a time when other parts of the airline industry were going through a decline. As Participant B23-F-III-TL said,

‘When you look at Finance, X, Y and Z [names of people] will all be leaving. Between them they have over 50 years experience - what a loss to the company. That has definitely not been thought out properly. They call it cutting costs... They seem to be cutting back where they shouldn’t be and adding on new positions they don’t need. I don’t understand where the benefits lie. I can’t see how that will increase profits.’

Moreover, Pfeffer (2005) pointed out that the irony is that there is an inconsistency between the concepts of cutting labour costs and attempting to secure good labour performance in an organisation that is being restructured. Furthermore, the resulting deficit of the discretionary effort from the employees serves to deepen the existing schisms and suspicions in the organisation. Discretionary effort is the difference between how well employees actually perform and how well they are capable of performing (Pfeffer, 2007). The term ‘discretionary’ implies that this additional effort is wholly within the control of the employee and, to a large extent, this is accurate. However, effectively capturing this ancillary level of effort and performance necessitates an amalgamated effort between employees and the organisation. The

distrust and insecurity in the organisation generated by downsizing and restructuring prevent any prospect of this collaborative effort becoming a reality. This syndrome is deeply detrimental to organisational well-being. For instance, in Organisation B, Participant B8-M-III-TM maintained,

‘This downsizing is not working... There aren’t enough people – I do ten things badly instead of five things well. We all do, not just me... It shouldn’t be like that, but at the end of the day I believe they [the organisation] are the losers.’

On a similar note, Participant B7-M-III-TM B said,

‘So many employees are so disillusioned - so they input nothing. I am like that. So, I have stopped communicating what I really think to my boss....But that doesn’t better the company, does it?’

As Feldheim and Liou (1999: 63) put it, when ‘cost considerations replace quality considerations, the principles of employee empowerment, responsibility and loyalty are sacrificed for a reduction in overhead. This trade-off results in a loss of employee trust in the organization and betrayal of the concept of work.’ Mergers, downsizing, and globalization have accelerated the pace of change in organizations, creating a crisis of trust that did not exist a generation ago (Hurley, 2006).

In Organisation B, where even the Fire Service was scheduled to be downsized; Participant B33-M-II-TMm a fireman, said,

‘Yes, it’s not every day we speak about it [downsizing] but much more frequently than we used to. We are all aware of it - it’s a concern. They [management] are even looking to fundamentally review the fire service - our pay-scales and roles and responsibilities. I appreciate there might be a need for some change. But the managers employed them and thought they were suitable - why should we have to apply again? But they are looking at getting us to apply via the development centre to be reassessed – and then probably many of us asked to go. They want more and more for less and less.’

However, when asked whether the downsizing had had any impact on employee morale or upward communication within the organisation, the Managing Director [B6-M-I-TS] of Organisation B remonstrated tersely,

‘But, but...what has the restructuring got to do with morale or upward communication!? That’s such a typically Ph.D question! We have never done so splendidly ... I have launched many [new communication initiatives] and all my employees have been very responsive to that. I don’t think that the downsizing has had any impact whatsoever on communication within the organisation. They are two totally unrelated issues.... Now, if you don’t mind, I have another appointment....’

Needless to say, it was a brief interview with an abrupt end.

On the other hand, the Human Resources Manager of Organisation B shed further light on the rationale behind the downsizing,

‘The difficulty in communication is particularly bad with the older members of staff who have been here for a long period of time, who just don’t understand why things have to change from how they were years ago... [The Managing Director’s] reaction to some of this is, ‘Well, just get rid of them.’ He frequently will come to me with a list of names and say, ‘Just get rid of these people!’ I have to remind him that we do have employment law and need to be fair. I don’t agree with his style but guess I do understand the whole philosophy of - why invest your time with people who are never going to be on the train we are going on – I guess they are left on the platform somewhere. Last month, the lady who won [the Managing Director’s suggestion scheme prize] was made redundant the following week! I thought you really don’t want to win this! We genuinely didn’t know that was going to happen... I felt so bad.’

In Organisation B, despite the numerous complicated new communication strategies that the new Managing Director launched for the employees with much fanfare and pizzazz, there was one topic on which they had had no communication whatsoever - and that was the subject of restructuring that was ongoing in the company,

department by department, almost like a silent scourge making its way through the organisation. As Participant B36-F-II-TM explained,

‘I think [the Managing Director] makes an effort in the [communication workshops] to make things easy to understand, like budgets and so on. But he does not make an effort to explain the much bigger concepts, like the building of [the new terminal] as that has changed the whole way the company’s run and led to the downsizing. It’s eating up the money.... It’s left to [my line manager] for instance to handle the downsizing...’

Feldheim et al., (1999) have noted that when management keep surviving employees informed of forthcoming changes, it can reduce the negative consequences of downsizing. As one of the junior managers said,

‘There are a lot of hidden agendas in the company these days. They say there isn’t but you feel that there is. There’s always a draft even before we’ve discussed anything. So there must be an agenda there.’ [B29-M-II-TM]

Research suggests that direct, honest and open communication with employees about the process of downsizing is the best policy and is what employees want. A full, open and factual statement of the reasons behind the downsizing helps prevent feelings of unfairness and promotes the sentiment that the downsizing is a shared experience (Pfeil, et al., 2003). It has been recognised that layoffs are not one-dimensional business decisions; they are complex changes that have a serious impact on people’s lives. Therefore, how a company communicates lay-offs and treats its employees are not forgotten easily (Pfeil, et al., 2003). Talking about the restructuring going on in the customer service department, where the employees of information desk were being reassessed (with a view to eliminating their positions and installing an automated system in their place) a young security guard, Participant B5-M-III-TM explained,

'I think they [senior management] don't think we are smart enough or aware enough of what is going on in the big picture. [The company newsletter] mentioned about the passenger information desk being changed and they put a positive spin on it - that I found quite funny, but in a *bad* way, because it is not funny. People will be let go. But it would be better if they just came clean, but they won't do that... Like look, we get [the first newsletter] once a month and we see the figures and how well we are doing. Then the [other newsletter] mentioned Finance [the department] and how it's getting downsized.'

Again, as Participant B3-M-II-TM said,

'In my...perception there are three factors at work here. On one hand you have the big profits – 30% or 35% up in the last quarter they said. On the other side, there are [the Managing Director's] new communication [initiatives]. And yet people being made to go...To me these three don't work together. I get squashed! I think there will always be that perception in the grassroots people of why are they cutting staff when we are making profits? Our passenger numbers are up this year as well. But we are still cutting back and it is extremely difficult to understand why and no one seems to have the answers?'

Unfortunately, there were no answers.

Pfeil et al., (2003) have suggested that when the employers ask their employees for input on how to cut costs, they would be amazed at how creative and helpful the employees could be. Moreover, Pfeil et al.(2003: 131) argued, 'It would help ease the pain of the employees if they knew that the employers have tried all possible options and downsizing is the last resort.' Furthermore, because change brings uncertainty, instability and turbulence to the workforce, he argued that the emphasis from the management should be on the element of transition, with no false forecasts to alleviate the confusion, panic and rumour within the organisation.

Besides this, 'telling someone they have just lost their job is one of the most delicate challenges in corporate communication. This painful task should not be assigned to the human resources department' (Pfeil et al., 2003: 133). Employees prefer to receive the message from their immediate managers and senior managers in that order. It is advisable to attain closure in the employee-manager relationship by having the manager deliver the message. Obviously, this is not the way things are done in Organisation B, where the news is conveyed to the employee through the Human Resources Department and often comes as a shock. On the other hand, the task of conveying this news is not easy for some managers either, as is evident from the words of Participant B11-M-I-TS,

'One of the weaknesses could be sometimes I am probably too much like them [my employees]. I have come up the ranks and don't come across as being a senior manager, more like one of the workforce. These days, it makes life harder when you have to put your manager's hat on and make people redundant... What you end up doing is you make yourself emotionally involved and this makes the other half of my job harder. I am more than willing to sit down and talk about what they did at the weekend and so on. You build that relationship and interface with people... and then when I have to make someone redundant which I have to do next week that is going to be very hard and it is probably harder on me because it's part of the business I don't like but I have to do – it's my job.'

Conversely, the Human Resources Manager of Organisation B has her own insights,

'In a working environment decisions have to be made that I may not always like; particularly within an HR function there are often things you have to do which you don't like. For example, recently we made a couple of people redundant which we've never done before... These things are very difficult to do but it's part of the role - and I have just got to remember that and not take it personally, or out of context...but it still rattles me a lot.'

4.7.2 The Victims and the Survivors

One of the victims of the downsizing [B24-F-II-TL] said,

‘But morale is pretty low; going by the friends I speak to and know. They have seen what is happened with us [the victims of the downsizing]. Well, someone has decided that’s how it should be... Unfortunately, they are higher than us and have the power. A lot of these redundancies are done without consulting the people it affects. It’s a bit strange what they are doing.’

On the other hand, Cooper (2007: bbc.co.uk) maintained that ‘survivor guilt’ affected many employees of the organisation who survived the downsizing. This was explained well by Participant B19-F-III-TM,

‘The people whose departments [are being downsized] are being affected by it right now.... They have lost interest which is understandable. It’s difficult. I ache for them... This used to be a place where you had a job for life and it’s not now. Everyone wonders when their day will come, if my role will be required any more. I can see how that it affects how people communicate, they are more guarded and cautious.... At the end of the day though if your time is up, you will go. Some very good people have gone – the company has decided it needs to change....’

Cooper (2007: bbc.co.uk) argued that some of the coping strategies that people use when they feel at risk of redundancy can actually add to an organisation’s problems, ‘They’ll often go to more waste-of-time meetings, try to take part in the politics, to protect their job...But this is called ‘presenteeism’, and can actually have the effect of making them more stressed - and worse at their core job, making them more vulnerable to redundancy in the future.’ As Participant B25-M-II-TM said,

‘If you sit down and think about it, [the downsizing] it really stresses you. When my alarm goes off in the morning, I won’t want to get up and come in to this...’

Moreover, the research of Worrall and Cooper (1998: 21) has shown that perceptions of the impact of downsizing 'vary substantially by, and systematically with, the managerial level of respondents - [with] the negative impact of change on loyalty, morale, motivation and sense of job security being much more pronounced for junior and managers and directors than for directors.' Additionally, the quandary is complicated by the fact that employees do not tend to believe their managers when they are told there will be no more downsizing. The Human Resources Manager of Organisation B was in two minds about the process of downsizing; she sounded bewildered,

'Downsizing, as [the Managing Director] says.... stops people getting complacent and ensures high delivery as long as they are aware what they have to do to keep their job. As long as it's communicated very clearly that your job is fine - as long as you are doing it very well ... We are going through a change as a company. I feel sometimes that it's almost managing by fear, but that's not the outward picture. To the outside world, it's a modern, successful, great company... I don't really know...'

As she continued her deliberations, in a troubled, perplexed manner, she voiced her angst on the issue,

'How do you encourage these negative people ... that's the Managing Director's word for employees reluctant to adapt to [the new communication initiatives] ... to leave? Maybe we should pay them to go if this is the only way to get rid of them? [The Managing Director] says it would give us a much broader platform to work on. But I would not be able to do that! I would have to say to the managers, well, please performance-manage these people out of their jobs please ... But it's very difficult. [The Managing Director] just wants to kick them out. He would have said to them, 'Ok, then, just go.' And I maybe understand why he thinks that way, but you just can't act on it... it would not be fair...'

It needs to be mentioned that the Human Resources Manager was herself the victim of the process of downsizing a year after the interview.

It was curious that some of the employees ventured an opinion that management were wary of downsizing their strong, forthright and brazen employees, but selected the weak and the feeble employees to make redundant,

‘And yet I have seen that the people who are outspoken are the ones who are successful. Yes, I think so. Maybe it’s a confidence thing. They are not scared to say what they think or make the tough decisions. They might think twice before messing with the outspoken ones. I would say it is a simple psychological perception.’ [B30-M-III-TL]

Herbert Spencer (1851) is often credited with introducing the phrase ‘survival of the fittest’, which simply means ‘the survival of those who are better at surviving’ - many members of the work force at Organisation B seemed to believe that the stronger and more outspoken employees seemed to be immune from downsizing. Maybe fortune does, indeed, favour the brave? However, rather paradoxically, and adding to the general level of confusion and uncertainty across the board, this belief existed side by side with a conflicting thought in the minds of the employees; that they had to be careful about what they said to their supervisors, in case it was used as an excuse to make them redundant. Participant B7-M-III-TM confided,

‘I am outspoken, but even I moderate what I say now. I have a mortgage to pay... I have no desire to leave. I want to maintain my standard of living. What do I do? So often I will say nothing and pretend to go along.’

Downsizing therefore, gave rise to an abundance of opinion conformity, employee silence and cynicism within the workforce.

4.7.3 The Impact on Human Psyche

An overabundance of problems has been noted (Cameron et al., 1993; Cole, 1993) as arising from downsizing, which impact on communication within the organisation, particularly upward communication. As Participant B34-F-II-TL said,

‘I suspect in many departments people could be scared to speak up... with this happening...’

Cole (1993) maintained that downsizing resulted in, firstly, the destruction of personal relationships between employees and management; secondly, increased interpersonal conflict; thirdly, more centralisation in organisational decision-making and lastly, decreased employee morale, commitment and loyalty. Symptoms amongst those who survive the downsizing include:

‘denial, job insecurity, feelings of unfairness, depression, stress and fatigue, reduced risk taking and motivation, distrust and betrayal, lack of reciprocal commitment, wanting it to be over, dissatisfaction with planning and communication, anger at the layoff process, lack of strategic direction, lack of management credibility, short-term profit focus, and a sense of permanent change... some optimism, lots of blaming others, and a thirst for information’ (Burke and Cooper, 2000: 9).

Those who have been downsized suffer from feelings of disbelief, great shock and a searing loss of self-worth. As Participant B10-F-III-TM, a recently restructured employee of Organisation B said,

‘To be honest, no, I was not expecting this to happen. I was very distressed. I was only back three weeks when they told me... I am one of the casualties of war. I have slipped through the cracks... there’s a new test and I didn’t have the aptitude for this. Even the Training Manager was fantastic. He helped me so much. But he couldn’t help me with the actual test...He helped me a great deal, explained everything. But I just couldn’t do it... They offered me [jobs in another city] but I didn’t want it. They said we could go for medical retirement. ...Well if we get the medical package – because of my arthritis – but I haven’t heard anything yet. Occupational health hasn’t got back to me

yet. Four weeks ago my own doctor hadn't heard....I don't have another job... So I had no job, no wages for a month... Yes, there was a meeting. The line manager was there and his line manager and the HR girl. I was shocked ...so shocked. It was a lot to take in even when you kind of expected it. I think I was hoping it wouldn't come to that... I thought when I got my permanent contract I was secure for the rest of my working life but I have been hung out to dry.'

Participant B24-F-II-TL, another victim of the restructuring, said,

'I have been here almost 20 years. Do you know what is happening in our department? As you are aware my job function is going to be based down in [another city] now and my services will no longer be required in two months. I am in such a state. I think I am still in shock.'

Yet another casualty of downsizing said,

'Before HR told me, I had no idea I was going to be let go... None at all. It was a bolt from the blue. I was angry too because no one came near me, except for [my line manager] who put his arm around me ... he was brilliant. But when it happened to the information desk, everyone came out of the woodwork.... I haven't discussed things with anyone ...No one discusses it in front of me anyway. I'm not really part of the team anymore. I know nothing about things ... I'm not included in anything.'

Moreover, research by Morrison (2000) has shown that managerial beliefs contributing to organizational silence are more common in organizations with a strategic focus on cost control; this also happens in the case of organisations in which downsizing is happening. When there is heavy strategic emphasis on control, managers may view negative feedback as more threatening and dissent as more destructive (Bourgeois, 1985; Miceli and Near, 1984, 1992).

Furthermore, employees seemed to have an almost intuitive understanding of the situation, coupled with an instinct for self- preservation, as was observed happening

at Organisation B. The result was a climate of employee silence, with employees muffling their insights, feelings and opinions. On the other hand, parallel to the silence, a culture of sycophancy resulted, with employees ingratiating with their managers to an excessive and outrageous extent and in doing so, subconsciously entreating to be liked and accepted by them, believing that this might make them exempt or immune from the downsizing process. Intriguingly, opinion conformity turned out to be, by far, the most extensively used facet of the theories of ingratiation and impression management. Furthermore, feelings of suspicion, scepticism and cynicism are rife. Participant B5-M-III-TM explained,

‘There’s so much you would like to say but you have to think about how it is and about not being downsized.... You need to be careful who you say things to. Some people will pass things on – there’s a lot of two-facedness here now with this going on...’

Speaking of the fraught climate in the organisation, another young employee said,

‘He [the Managing Director] is new and has carried out a lot of changes since he’s been here. But, then the downsizing...quite a few jobs have gone, which creates a nervous atmosphere....Not many people are 100% sure of their jobs. So, I think people are just staying very quiet and watching... Considering that the morale is low, people are insecure and are scared to say what they think, they adopt many of these [pointing to impression management behaviours in the Table of Upward Influence Tactics used during the interview].’

4.7.4 Communication Strategies

Research has indicated that top managers tend to over-estimate the gains from downsizing while under-estimating its negative consequences (Tourish et al., 2004). A serious problem here is the difficulty for senior managers in obtaining critical feedback from their insecure employees about decisions and assessments –

employees are likely to feel aggrieved when they conclude that they are being unfairly treated and do not know what is going on (Miller et al., 1994). As Participant B27-F-II-TM explained,

‘This feeling of insecurity is all over. Look at what has happening to the information desk. I know the other people feel the same...But at the end of the day, if you keep taking it all away, it won’t improve things. Some people are left with far too much of a workload and that will tell on them.’

This lends support to the proposition that new lines of communication and keeping surviving workers informed of changes by explaining the rationale behind them can reduce some of the more negative consequences of downsizing (Feldman, 1989). It should be noted that this does not suggest that the negative effects can be entirely eliminated. In fact, there does not seem to be any research supporting the view that either employee morale or organisational performance are likely to remain unaffected by downsizing.

Indeed, this is consistent with the experience of Organisation B, where the new and glitzy communication strategies of the new Managing Director were scorned as disingenuous and insincere. Participant B33-M-II-TM said,

‘Everyone is getting analysed, assessed, we may be even told to go... but at the same time the MD is promoting these new [communication initiatives]... I personally don’t want to be involved in these, not when they are getting rid of people...There are these three things going on - downsizing, the communication strategies, and did you know the profits going up about 30% in the last quarter. If you do have profitability, why downsize? I don’t understand it. They are making more money with less, but at the end of the day you can only cut back so far. I used to think [this company] was an excellent company. Not any more. We are a resource, just a number...But I can’t get enthusiastic about some things like the [communication strategy]. When we have the MD’s [communication workshop] it’s voluntary and a lot of our guys won’t go. They’re not interested because of how the company is being run.’

Moreover, as Participant B30-M-III-TL sighed and agreed,

‘Staff are a bit confused; although you go to the [communication workshops] and he [Managing Director] blows his own trumpet, but there are people there who think, ‘Well I’ve just had a letter asking if I want to reapply for my job or take redundancy.’ It’s hard to get your head around...The morale here is not very good just now. When I come to work now, I don’t like it much. It’s not the same. I think a lot of people are scared. I know I am. There’s a lot of uncertainty. People say they could come in tomorrow and it [downsizing] could happen to them.’

4.7.5 Summary

Kilpatrick (1999: 215) stressed that, ‘Employees should be provided all information that it is possible to share without jeopardizing the organization’s survival... Communication - frequent, consistent and open - is one of the most important variables in the implementation of a downsizing plan.’ However, in the case of Organisation B, this would not have been what was practised. The Managing Director’s new communication strategies did not address the consequences of downsizing for his employees. They were, therefore, regarded by many of the employees as a sham, and treated with civil disdain.

An elemental difficulty with downsizing is that many organisations pursue it as an effective cost cutting strategy, while simultaneously advocating high involvement communication programmes (Tourish and Hargie, 2004, Mishra, 1998, 1989). However, ‘... employee trust and empowerment, often shattered in the process of downsizing, are the engines that make these initiatives work’ (Mishra et al., 1998: 84). This contradiction is so clearly visible in the case of Organisation B, where

ruthless downsizing is taking place, but where the Managing Director's new communication propaganda does not address the issue in the slightest, giving rise to an almost surreal organisational atmosphere. As Participant B30-M-III-TL put it,

'There are two dynamics going on in [the organisation] today – one is to streamline communication and make employees feel motivated and worthwhile, and the other is there is a lot of downsizing and these don't go together somehow... there is a general feeling that there is a big dip in morale generally in the organisation.'

'Communication is a transformative ingredient in organisational life' Tourish and Hargie (2004: 34). This study suggests that organisations who engage in downsizing are simultaneously damaging their communication climate and preventing themselves from realising its transformative potential.

4.7.6 Coda

Without exception, the most critically minded and outspoken employees, such as Participants B19-F-III-TM, B14-F-I-TM and B4-M-III-TL, lost their jobs, further down the line, in the downsizing process. A year and a half after the completion of the field-work in the organisation, the Managing Director moved on to a more senior position within the holding company.

4.8 Upward Communication and the Land That Celebrates Robbie Burns

*'What though on hamely fare we dine,
Wear hoddin grey, an' a that;
Gie fools their silks, and knaves their wine;
Their tinsel show, an' a' that...
The honest man, tho' e'er sae poor,
Is king o' men for a' that'*

Robert Burns (1759–96), 'A Man's a Man for a' that'

4.8.1 Introduction

On the day that the Scottish Parliament (1999) was opened, the First Minister, Donald Dewar (1937-2000) said, 'At the heart of that song is a very Scottish conviction: that honesty and simple dignity are priceless virtues not imparted by rank and birth, but part of the very soul.'

Craig (2005) has argued that one of the reasons that the Scots have a strong belief in equality is that Scottish Presbyterianism is a deeply democratic religion; the Scots had managed to separate their Kirk from the king and state and construct it on thoroughly democratic foundations. As Hargie and Dickson (2004: 32) have said, 'Culture can be regarded as the way of life, customs and script of a group of people. Cultural and subordinate-cultural variables have a bearing on the different features of the communicative process.' In turn, communication also moulds culture (Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey, 1996). This section proceeds to explore how the culture of the Scots may influence the dynamics of their upward organisational communication.

The significance of logical thinking, goodwill, decency and fair-play are deeply ingrained in the Presbyterian ethics of the country and still hold sway in contemporary North East Scotland. Craig (2005: 69) said, ‘Viscount Stair enunciated the principles underlying Scottish law in the seventeenth century and three centuries later, the Scots are still intent on putting these principles at the heart of Scottish public life.’ The ethos of the Scotland Act (1998) was defined by the all - party Steering Group, which determined that the Parliament’s activities should be anchored by four guiding principles – power-sharing, accountability, openness and participation. This study suggests that these are qualities that one still sees in some of the value-systems and mores of a quintessentially Scottish workplace, such as Organisation C, which impact on its communication patterns.

4.8.2 Ingratiation Theory and Impression Management in Scotland

Quite a few of the participants of this research, particularly in Organisation C, were keen to emphasise that flattery and other enhancement, facets of ingratiation theory (Jones, 1964) are not part of the intrinsic Scottish ethos. Furthermore ‘we feel no necessity whatsoever to indulge in any airs and graces’; anything that is ‘all meringue and nae mince’ or seen as pretentious is easily suspect in Scotland (Craig, 2005: 125), and especially in North East Scotland. Participant C20-M-II-TL explained,

‘There is a local expression in the North East - ‘couthy’ - which means more friendly, down to earth, and [Organisation C] is ‘couthy.’ We can be too soft but then the other extreme is to be really hard-nosed and aggressive, which is not appreciated here...’

This attitude is echoed in the words of Participant C31-M-I-TL,

‘Maybe it makes us (the Scots) a bit bland or insipid, but we tend to take everyone’s views into consideration. We never like to stand out... Non - confrontational, is the word I think...’

Craig (2005: 69) remarked, ‘Nowadays the Scots can be depicted as an independent-minded, opinionated and sceptical people...Even when the Scots appear to outwardly respect authority, few will accept others’ opinions and views as face-value... The [Scots] need to be convinced, to see the logic and rationale behind something ... the Scots are more likely to be questioning rather than accommodating.’ As the Managing Director of Organisation C [C4-M-I- TL] said,

‘I think there is an element of a norm of not being confrontational but in my experience people would say if they didn’t agree. That’s true that it’s not the Scottish culture to be confrontational. So it’s probably more to do with that than the company. But ... I don’t think anyone would agree with me just because I am the boss... ‘.

This research, however, found that of the many tactics of impression management and ingratiation, opinion conformity stood out as being the most commonly used as part of the dynamics of upward communication. This is discussed in detail in the final chapter, Chapter 5.

Nonetheless, there is no appreciation for the guiles of flattery and deviousness in the Scottish way of life. As Participant B31-M-I-TS said,

‘Rendering favours - I would feel very uncomfortable about it. It would be so awkward.’

Or as Participant C22-F-III-TL explained about self descriptions,

‘I couldn’t do that (self-descriptions), it is not our way here ...’

Moreover, a director of Organisation C said,

'I wouldn't want people who work for me to agree with everything I say or flatter me. That would be a weakness. [My assistant] and I have always a bit of banter and I will say to her, why can't we get this cheaper? She doesn't always agree with me and I like that. I wouldn't want her to agree all the time. That wouldn't be honest.' [C31-M-I-TL]

Or as Participant E20-F-III-TS said,

'Enhancement? Flattery? It's not a Scottish thing to do really. No. Not a lot of people here do that. They would make their points in a nice way, but that's all. Or say it in a jokey way....'

From Organisation P, Participant P3-M-II-TL said,

'I've seen self-descriptions. Some people do, I know, but generally I think people are a bit more modest about their achievements in this part of Scotland - even in the oil world... The Americans are the opposite though...'

Carlisle (2006) maintains that a prevailing Scottish belief is that it is wrong to think highly of yourself and that you should see yourself as the same as others. She agrees that Americans share this strong belief in equality, but in their culture it leads to the view that if we are all born equal, then everyone is special; whereas in Scotland the notion that we are all equal leads to the idea that no-one is special.

Nevertheless, extreme ingratiation and flattery do not fit into the Scottish ethos. As Participant C19-M-II-TS said,

'I suppose I have heard it (other-enhancement, flattery) a bit... But, it would sound strange and I am not sure how well it would be taken; it's not really the Scottish way...'

The founder of Organisation P explained,

'They don't sit well with me [flattery]. Because of the cultural context in the oil industry, it does happen. If you see flattery, you look for the intention behind it. There is sometimes an ulterior motive or it might be cultural and quite innocent. Some people believe that is what is expected. I was in Dubai and the staff was predominantly Asian. Every time I was there they gave me a gift. The ethics are difficult. And different...'

4.8 3 Summary

John Grierson (1939: G3.14.7) sums up the Scottish ethos thus, ‘... our practicality is of a people with a living to make, and a daily job to do, and no fine airs to impress on anybody.’ This is perhaps why the haughty Managing Director of Organisation B was not respected or accepted by the people of his organisation; it is not only because of the impact of the similarity bias (Cialdini, 2001),

‘He [the Managing Director] is so arrogant. He is like a kid who’s spat out his dummy ... He reacts very well to flattery and obsequiousness ... He likes it if you are quiet and brainless and do whatever he wants. He thinks he is superior to us ... All high and mighty ... What I can’t understand is that there are several people up there who are definitely not brainless. But before they can earn more money or get promoted, they have to follow the system. They [top management] create the people they want.’ [B30-M-III-TL]

To conclude, ‘common decency’, (Craig, 2005: 124) fair- play, unpretentiousness and plain talking are time-honoured tenets in North East Scotland. This study has found that to a greater or lesser extent, they exert an influence on the pulse of upward communication of the organisations researched.

4.9 Gender and Upward Communication

4.9.1 Introduction

As has been noted earlier in the research, critical management research does not recommend taking gender into account. Many critical management researchers proposed that the idea that there are two genders should be dropped within the social sciences (Alvesson and Deetz, 2001). Fraser and Nicholson (1988) declined to acknowledge the terms 'women' and 'men.' They argued that the label 'gender' has a negative inference and is mistaken, with the implicit suggestion that a huge amount of the population is more alike than it really is, based on secondary biological characteristics. Furthermore, they believed that applying concepts like gender to interpretive analysis may have been historically justified, when there may have been limitations and constraints on the expectations and opportunities of women in general, but that these do not necessarily result in significant explanations today.

On the other hand, an understanding of the differences of gender is critical to an understanding of human perception, even within the organisation. According to self-categorization theory, people as a rule attempt to simplify their social and organisational worlds and therefore classify each other and themselves into social categories (Hewstone, Hantzi, and Johnson, 1991; Turner, 1987; Shah, Kruglanski, and Thompson, 1998). Hewstone et al., (1991: 526) have studied the 'automaticity of race [and gender] as a basis for social categorization.' Such categorization often occurs 'automatically and without conscious awareness' (Hewstone et al., 1991: 579).

Although recent research in the paradigm of minimal groups indicates that any social feature can prompt social categorization, people are especially prone to categorizing each other and themselves on the basis of visible or readily observable characteristics such as gender and race (Aquino and Bommer, 2003).

Therefore, there is a valid rationale for this research to examine the implications of gender within the context of communication in an organisational setting. As such, this project has recorded the variations of the responses between the men and women participants and proceeds to look at the innuendoes of female upward communication within the four organisations researched.

4.9.2 Report v. Rapport

The different approaches that men and women use to communicate have been described as ‘debate v. relate’, ‘report v. rapport’, or ‘competitive v. cooperative’ (Coates, 1986). Men are reputed to use uncomplicated and straightforward methods of communication whereas women tend to endeavour and establish intimacy by discussing problems and showing concern and empathy in order to underpin and reinforce interactions, including work relationships.

The British anthropologist Trudgill (2000) paved the way for ‘genderlects’, the study of the different modes of communication used by the sexes. Their studies consistently indicated that these differences were established in childhood, where early behaviour and play patterns shaped speech prototypes. In short, boys are presumed to play in larger groups organized hierarchically and therefore learn the value of upfront, direct

communication whereas girls are alleged to play in smaller groups, or clusters of close friends, 'where they learn to maximize intimacy and minimize conflict' (Cameron, 1992: 73). It is important to note, in what follows, that the data here constitutes peoples' perceptions of male and female differences in communication patterns, but does not actually constitute the kind of examples of such differences, as may have been disclosed by directly observational research. In the words of Participant E18-F-II-TM:

'I think women are much more perceptive and discerning than men, when they communicate with their managers on critical issues...much more sensitive in their communication, even in the work place ... in all communications.... Men are very protective of themselves, they shield their feelings I think... but women are more open and willing to show emotion.'

Nevertheless, Participant E17-M-III-TS talked about her approach to the problems of communication in Organisation E:

'I do think communication is a big issue here. But I prefer not to get involved in office politics. I have suggested things [to the manager] in the past; in a pleasant, open manner...nothing was done; so now I just get on with it. I have a small family and a baby girl and I am much more involved with that ... so I just turn up, do the job and go home. I have a life apart from the organisation.'

Although early research has described women's speech as deviant relative to men's, women were presumed to use less powerful speech styles (Turner, 1987). More recent approaches that are consonant with an inter-group perspective maintained that women's speech is not deviant, but simply different from men's (Lakoff, 1975). Girls learn interaction styles that emphasize cooperation and equality and acquire the ability to attend sensitively to relationships and situations. Their interest in social-emotional, relational aspects is demonstrated by greater attention to the face needs of

the people they are communicating with and a greater tendency to talk about personal matters (Fitzpatrick et al, 1995). On the other hand, boys learn interaction styles that emphasize competition and hierarchical relations and learn how to assert their individual identity (Maltz and Borker, 1982, Tannen, 1994). These tendencies are reputed to transit to adult life. As Participant B4-M-III-TS, (a man) said,

‘We have a good Station Officer and Sub Officer and have a good relationship with them... but a lot of our guys are vocal and they are not scared to speak up, which is great. We say what we have to...Any problems we air them and they get cleared up...’

In Organisation P, Participant P14-F-III-TS, (a woman), explained how she dealt with her difficult superior:

‘It takes tact and skill to handle the Managing Director when he is gnashing his teeth or in one of his bad moods. One needs to be diplomatic...I would rather wait for a better moment than talk to him right then. I have learnt how to suss him out now and approach him with a wee joke or ... humour him before beginning to talk to him’

Additionally, a woman employee in the same organisation, Participant B12-F-III-TS, talked about the mildly coquettish manner she adopted when communicating with her line manager:

‘I use humour a lot with him [the superior]. And my charm too... (*giggles*) and I say amusing things to make him laugh ... I had a big row with him once as well but mostly it was humour. Yes, but the meaning was there and I would humour him by saying, oh, you’re such a waste of time...or I am going to tell you this, but I know you won’t do anything about it. But there were some times when something serious happened and I had to take him by the scruff of the neck and say, we need to do something about this. Probably I did try to boost his confidence as well to try to win him over. I joke a lot with him ...’

The communication dynamic between woman employee and her boss (man) can be intriguing. In Organisation E, the attractive Participant E9-F-II-TS explains,

‘I flatter the boss sometimes – maybe not with work-type things. You see, [the CEO] loves eating out, that sort of thing... and I will talk to him about that, as I know he likes it. Gourmet stuff, for instance, nice restaurants.... I ask him about food and wine and he likes that, being thought refined and sophisticated. So, in that sense, yes, I flatter him and sort of flirt with him. He really enjoys the attention I give him, though ...’ [E9-F-II-TS]

Participant E10-F-II-TM, a woman, shared this view,

‘Other enhancement means flattering the boss or complimenting the boss. I suppose so. I must confess I am quite guilty of that! I do it a lot...’

Research has found that ‘much like interactions between cultural groups with different language norms, men and women interact with different assumptions and goals...’ (Noels et al., 2003: 245). For instance, Mulac et al., (1998) found men used inferences to quantity and directives more than women, who tended to use sensitive adverbs and references to emotion. However, the sole female fire-fighter in the fire watch interviewed at Organisation B, Participant B4-F-III-TS, protested,

‘I wouldn’t want to be treated differently. I talk, act and conduct myself the same as anyone else here... I was determined when I started that they wouldn’t need to do anything different for me. It was nerve-wracking for me and for the first couple of weeks, they were so doting: I am the youngest here too you see... and they did stand back a wee bit. But they have been great – they seem to have accepted me and I hope they think of me as an equal, because I sure do...’

The Human Relations Manager of Organisation B, Participant B14-F-I-TM, who was the only woman on the management team and who was also pregnant, spoke of her frustration at being treated differently occasionally:

‘If you start to become emotional, it won’t work, especially if you are a woman! I’ve had comments before, particularly during my pregnancy, like, ‘Oh it’s your pregnancy talking’ or ‘It’s just your hormones, dear; we understand.’ So I think there is an element of that as well, seeing me just as a woman ... I need to keep the emotion and sentiment out of my

communication, specially with the bossand also the fact that I am the only female on the management team.'

Furthermore, Wittig (1992) maintained that for women, communication is primarily a medium of rapport, a means of establishing connections and negotiating relationships. On the other hand, he maintained that for most men, discourse is primarily a process of establishing or preserving independence and negotiating and maintaining status in a hierarchical social order by 'exhibiting knowledge and skill' (Wittig, 1992: 77). On the other hand, women are more likely to personalize conversations and use intimacy, charm and emotion, a modus operandi that men sardonically consign to the realm of blether and gossip (Jones, 1980). Moreover, research has contended that men have been found to keep their distance from relational and human issues by reducing them to theories and abstractions, even in the work place (Aries, 1976; Steinem, 1991; Swacker, 1975; Tannen, 1990).

However, this is not always so: in the case of Organisation E, employees perceived the CEO's trusted second-in-command, a woman, the Operations Director, as being even more difficult and intractable than they did him. As Participant E8-F-II-TM, a woman, said,

'With the CEO [man], I have mainly small talk and maybe that's how it should be with your boss. The Operations Director [woman] is very focussed and forthright with her opinions. She is quite blatant, very aggressive...definitely more stick than carrot. I think she is the harder, the less emotional of the two... It's hard to change her mind if it's set on something. She is not empathic or flexible. Not very approachable... I think [the CEO] may be a better bet to talk to ...'

Participant E18-F-II-TM, also a woman, said,

‘The operations manager is a hard, quite strong woman and I think there is a definite difference between a man and a woman in that position. I am sure she could be scary if she wanted to. Very assertive... I prefer to toe the line. She doesn’t mince her words...’

Nonetheless, the question needs to be asked whether the Operations Director of Organisation E was justified in adopting a hard attitude and a matching communication style. As she said of herself,

‘I see through all the nasty bits. No one can get past me... I am the one with the baseball bat but that doesn’t bother me. But to be accepted as a woman in business you have to be seen as hard and as tough as the guys, maybe even harder and tougher. And I am that way... My own communication reflects this and also... I react to careless [upward] communication badly; I have no time for fools ...’

It is significant that Geddes and Konrad (2003) found that men reacted more unfavourably to negative feedback when it was delivered by a woman. Speaking of a recent experience, a junior employee of Organisation E (a man) said of the Operations Director (a woman),

‘Oh Boy, but is she tough! You don’t want a run- in with her...’

Hence, upward communication with the lady director of Organisation E was of a similar tone as what employees would use with the CEO of the organisation, a man.

As Ryan and Haslam (2005: 88) said,

‘It is already well established that women face greater challenges than men in their attempts to climb to the top of the corporate ladder. Moreover, it is apparent that even if they arrive there, women are likely to receive greater scrutiny and criticism than men, and to secure less positive evaluations, even when performing exactly the same leadership roles (Eagly et al., 1992)... So, in addition to confronting a glass ceiling and not having access to a glass elevator, they are also likely to be placed on a glass cliff.’

Nonetheless, the terrain of organisational life is changing, gender boundaries in all walks of life are dispersing and with this, the communication patterns of women who work in them will continue to evolve.

See Appendix 47: Percentage Pie Charts on the Gender Balance in all the Four Organisations.

4.9.3 Conclusion

This chapter has provided a comprehensive interpretive analysis of the empirical evidence of the fieldwork of this study, which have revealed many intriguing findings. An overall profile of upward communication in each of the four organisations has been presented. In addition, eight key variables have been identified, and data drawn from each of the organisations has been analysed to illuminate their dynamics. The next chapter will discuss these findings and review them in the light of the research aim and objectives.

CHAPTER 5

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1.1 Introduction

This is the final chapter of the thesis, and seeks to synthesise the research. Firstly, each of the variables of the analysis is discussed and the findings presented. Furthermore, the results of the investigation are considered in the light of the extent to which they meet the research objectives. Propositions for future research are reviewed. Furthermore, broader issues of upward communication and the challenges which face organisational theory and practice are considered. As a consequence of this process, a theoretical model of upward communication, which synthesizes previously disparate elements of the literature on ingratiation theory and impression management, organisational silence, and cynicism, will be proposed. Finally, the limitations of the research design and the methodology are explored.

5.1.2 The Results and the Research Aim and Objectives

This is the point where the study comes full circle and the connections between the research aim and objectives, and the conclusions of the variables of the analysis are integrated.

First of all, the study demonstrates how the variables of the analysis correspond to and complement the research aim and objectives. Secondly, the study proceeds to illustrate how the findings of the analysis synchronize with the research aim and objectives.

The researcher first sets out the research aim and objectives, and the eight variables of the study and proceeds to explain how each of variables answered the aim and objectives of the thesis:

Aim and Objectives: To recap, the research aim of the study was to explore the dynamics of upward communication in organisations. The objectives are to:

1. identify the main barriers, filters and concerns that impede the flow of critical feedback
2. explore the attitudes, changes and forces that stimulate employees to limit the amount of critical feedback they are willing to offer and to explore the impediments managers often put in the way of critical upward feedback, intentionally or otherwise
3. consider how the schema of impression management and ingratiation theory might be implicated in the transmission and receipt of feedback
4. develop a valid, robust qualitative methodology

The Variables: The analysis and investigation were classified and categorised into the following eight subjects or variables:

1. The practical aspects of upward communication in the four organisations
2. Employee voice and silence and the effects of tenure in the four organisations
3. The use of ingratiation and impression management, with a special emphasis on opinion conformity
4. The subordinate/superior network, the initiator of upward communication, the effects of distance on upward communication, ROL and cynicism

5. The dynamics of power, size, and hierarchy on upward communication
6. The effects of downsizing on upward communication organisation on morale, which impacts directly on organisational communication and creates employee silence. The ingratiation and impression management tactics used during the process of upward communication are considered. This variable was used specifically for Organisation B.
7. The connections, if any, between gender and upward communication
8. The impact of local culture and ethos on the tenor of upward communication and upward influence tactics

5.1.3 The Interface between the Aim and Objectives and the Variables:

Firstly, the analysis of the first two variables, (the practical aspects of upward communication and employee voice and silence), responds directly to the main aim of the research, to explore the dynamics of upward communication in organisations. Secondly, the examination of the second two variables, (on the subordinate/superior network, the search for the main initiator of upward communication, the survey of the effects of distance of the leader from the subordinate on upward communication, ROL and cynicism), addresses the first research objective of identifying the main barriers, filters and concerns that impede the flow of critical feedback. Furthermore, the analysis of the variable of the impact of organisational power, size, and hierarchy on upward communication, answer the same objective. The third variable (the use of ingratiation and impression management, with a special emphasis on opinion conformity) addresses the third research objective, which seeks to explore the use of ingratiation and impression management during the process of upward

communication, as influence tactics. The investigation of variables 6, 7 and 8 (the effects of downsizing on upward communication, the influence of the local culture and ethos on upward feedback and the connections, if any, between gender and communication between the subordinate and the superior), respond to the second research objective of identifying the forces, energies and attitudes that constrain employees to limit, articulate or filter their feedback. Finally, the last research objective, developing a valid, robust qualitative methodology is achieved by designing a qualitative, interpretive methodology, which was appropriate to the realisation of the research objectives that had been set. Each of these objectives will now be discussed individually. This chapter thus proceeds to examine the main consequences of the analysis in the light of each research objective, and the extent to which these were achieved is assessed.

5.1.3.1. Upward Communication

This variable is now discussed from the perspective of how it addresses the main research aim – namely, an investigation into the dynamics of upward communication in organisations.

There is a presumption, often accurate, on the employee's part that if s/he brings bad news or complaints s/he will be seen as 'not a team player' or as a trouble-maker. Often there is the perception that the messenger of a critical insight will be 'killed.' As such, many problems go unreported and unresolved (Atwater, in press).

In Organisation B, despite the communication strategies of the new Managing Director, paradoxically, fractured non-flows of upward communication ensued, because downsizing created unease, anxiety, disengagement, silence and cynicism. In contrast, in Organisation C, 100% of participants testified to its excellent levels of open and honest upward communication and of their great respect for the Managing Director. However, in Organisation E, upward communication proved to be stilted and warped. There was doubt that the new communication initiatives of the dictatorial CEO would actually work out. Organisation P, as an innovative organisation, enjoyed brisk and direct flows of upward communication. Employees had learned to handle the volatile and tempestuous Managing Director, who was nonetheless, responsive, self-aware and well-meaning and looked upon by his staff as part of the gang. However, the flows of upward communication were compromised by a few new technical specialists, who were highly skilled but inarticulate, presumably with the intent of safeguarding their technological terrain. *See Chapter 4.2 and 4.3.*

Furthermore, quite a few intriguing syndromes of upward communication were revealed in the research. Firstly, most employees, as a rule, enjoyed a higher level of comfort communicating with their immediate superiors than they did with the level above their line- managers. Secondly, employees were more willing to communicate with their superiors in private than in public. Often, the subordinates who would not, under any circumstances, speak up in a meeting or workshop, would communicate fluently with their superior in the privacy of an office space. This was found to be the same for employee silence. Many subordinates preferred to remain silent in public but were not averse to speaking to their superior in private. *See Chapters 4.2 and 4.3.*

The quality of personal relationships and the social capital involved have a very strong impact on the pulse of upward communication between subordinate and superior. If the relationship is agreeable and characterised by trust, the level and quality of the upward communication involved will be also healthy, open and lucid. The converse is also true.

Finally, although most employees and members of management were aware that a high quality of open, upward communication augmented organisational wellbeing, there was also a realisation particularly from employees, that anonymous and 'nameless' upward communication could possibly help to insulate them from retaliation and retribution.

5.1.3.2 Employee Voice and Silence

The findings in relation to this variable illuminate the main aim of the research; silence and voice are important dynamics in organisational upward communication.

As Detert and Edmondson (2006: 2) say, 'Upward voice in organizations is both crucial and problematic. Most modern organizations depend on the knowledge, ideas and observations of their employees for current and future performance.' There is mounting evidence, however, that people often choose silence over voice (Milliken, Morrison and Hewlin, 2003; Ryan and Oestrich, 1998). Upward voice is especially challenging when it involves pointing out problems, because organizations tend to

celebrate and study successes rather than seeking to learn from failures (Rosen and Tesser, 1970).

Detert and Edmondson (2006) have pointed out that the estimations that support the conclusion that voice costs outweigh voice benefits are rooted not only in prior experience of how those with power have treated people, but also in broad social norms and innate qualities of human psychology. Thus, challenging the status quo by speaking up requires that the desire to stimulate organisational learning be stronger than the discomfort of breaking deeply ingrained rules, such as deferring to authority (Milgram, 1974) and saving the face of others in public interactions (Goffman, 1959).

Therefore, speaking up is more likely to happen in the organisation when employees believe it is safe and worthwhile (Ashford et al. 1998; Miceli and Near, 1992; Ryan and Oestrich, 1998; Withey and Cooper, 1989). Detert and Edmondson (2006:7) maintain, 'Safety refers to the perception that personal costs will be low (in terms of reputation, promotion, or interpersonal reaction), and worthwhile denotes *utility*, or a belief that the target's response will justify the effort of voice' Organisation C was one such organisation, where both the safety and utility factors were high. On the other hand, the safety and utility factors were low in Organisation B and Organisation E and silence was rife. In Organisation P, flows of upward communication were fairly open: organizations competing in knowledge and technological economies are said to require the "ideas, input and intelligence" from "*all* organizational members" for success (Pfeffer, 1998: 121).

Employee voice and silence are therefore, crucial facets of upward communication. Detert (2007: 23/24) conducted a survey on internal communication, which revealed that employees believed that 'they felt it was *not* 'safe to speak up' or challenge traditional ways of doing things. What they were most reticent to talk about were not problems but rather creative ideas for improving products, processes, or performance.' In short, silence can colour most forms of upward communication, critical or not.

It needs to be noted that the syndrome of silence formed part of the Table of upward influence tactics used during the interviews, to invite reactions and responses on its use or not, from the participants. Furthermore, as had been suggested by research (Detert, 2007; Morrison and Milliken, 2000; Milliken et al., 2003), it was found that the fear of retaliation from management is the main reason why employees keep silent. Precedent too, has an influence on why employees remain silent. For instance, if an employee has, through his or her own experience, or through the experiences of peers, communicated with the superior and been rebuffed, s/he will, in the future, be wary of communicating in a similar vein and therefore, choose the safer option of remaining silent. Moreover, this research found that if the superior is perceived by the subordinate as having a difficult, aggressive or assertive personality, s/he will probably desist from communicating with him or her in an open, honest manner and even remain silent.

It was also found that employees often come to their own conclusions of different aspects of organisational life based on hearsay, insufficient information or on the

basis of 'urban legends.' Sensemaking is done impulsively or impetuously. More often than not, this has an impact on employee silence. A vicious circle begins; the subordinate has formed a negative perception of a facet of organisational life, because s/he has insufficient information and because barriers in the process of internal communication prevent him/her from finding facts by communicating with his/her superiors. The resulting decision of the sullen subordinate to remain silent augments the problem even further. *See Chapter 4.3.*

However, in the research, not every participant said that s/he would be happy to remain silent. Much depended on the personality, self-esteem, self-worth, locus of control and character of the individual. The research encountered a blip in the general pattern here, based on some employees professing to speak up no matter what the circumstances were and thus revealing what has previously been characterised in the literature as a high sense of self worth and an internal locus of control. In contrast, people with an external locus of control and a lesser sense of self worth would prefer to remain silent (Ralston, 1985). *See Chapter 4.3.*

This, in turn, was found to have a connection to the age or maturity of the employee and the number of years s/he had worked in the organisation or with the same superior. The tenure of the subordinate in the organisation and the length of time s/he had enjoyed or otherwise working with the supervisor impacted on his/her decision to be silent. As Morrison and Milliken (2000) indicated, this research found that the degree of trust and ease of the subordinate to speak up increases with time. Hence, subordinates who are young, or have not spent much time in the organisation, who

are somewhat unsure of themselves and had not become their authentic selves, were more likely to remain silent while interacting with their superiors, compared to employees who were older, ostensibly more self-assured and who had spent a longer time in the organisation and developed a rapport with their superior.

The research found that demographic similarity between the subordinate and the supervisor worked to increase levels of upward communication and reduce silence. In Organisation C, where the Managing Director and the other directors came from the same parts of the country and had the same background as many of the subordinates; communication flowed. In Organisation B, however, the Managing Director was from another part of the country, many of the local employees were distrustful of him and this impacted on the resulting high level of silence and low level of upward communication. *See Chapter 4.3.*

Finally, the findings corroborated the view of the literature that silence stems from employee feelings that they were not valued, were under appreciated, and shown little or no respect. In Organisation C, for instance, which took pride in being a loyal employer, and where the employees felt comfortable, appreciated and valued, levels of employee silence were the lowest, at 34%. In contrast, in Organisation B, where the employees believed they were disrespected not treated well by top management, levels of silence were the highest, at 92%. *See Appendix 43.*

5.1.3.3 Ingratiation and Impression Management Behaviours

This variable addresses the third research objective; whether or not ingratiation and impression management behaviours were used in organisations, as employees communicated with their superiors.

It was seen in the analysis that both ingratiation theory and impression management were used as subordinates communicated with their superiors, but in varying measures. The two theories of impression management and ingratiation have the following dynamics in common: Other enhancement, Rendering favours, Opinion conformity and Favourable Self-presentation.

From the analysis, it was clear that the dynamic of Opinion Conformity (a common factor in both theories) stood out prominently as the most conspicuously used aspect of ingratiation theory and impression management in upward communication in all the four organisations. It has, therefore, been singled out for scrutiny and further analysis later on in this chapter and is also used as one of the components of the new model that this research suggests. The use of other enhancement followed the use of opinion conformity as an influence tactic in upward communication, but to a much lesser extent. *See Chapter 4.5.*

The other upward influence tactics of Self-Descriptions, Accounts, Apologies and Acclaiming and favourable Self-presentation, from Impression Management (Goffman, 1959) and Ingratiation Management (Jones, 1964), were seen to be used reasonably, but as a normal and unremarkable part of human interaction in the organisation. Although a certain modest amount of self description (showing off) was

considered acceptable in the workplace, showing off overtly was not a tactic that was usually used as part of upward communication. It was, furthermore, not considered part of the Scottish ethos to boast or brag.

Hence, from the data analysis, it became obvious that the features of ingratiation theory and impression management were not used in equal degrees by the interviewees in this study. Opinion conformity, a common denominator of both theories was used to a much greater extent than all the other aspects of the theories. Following from this, other enhancement or flattery was occasionally used as an influencing tactic in upward communication, but in a fairly restrained manner. The giving of favours and gifts was the least used aspect of ingratiation theory. However, as part of the findings, it needs to be noted that in Scotland, the overt flattery of and the random giving of gifts to, the superior, are behaviours that are not considered acceptable or *de rigueur*; nor are they received favourably as part of upward communication. *See Chapter 4.5.*

It was also found that the choice of ingratiation and impression management tactics stemmed from the personality, character and authenticity of each individual employee intertwined with the demands of the circumstances and their relationship with the superior.

Furthermore, as was noted in the use of silence, it was observed that the use of ingratiation theory and impression management as part of upward communication

decreased as the employees became more mature or older and their tenure with the organisation increased. *See Chapter 4.5.*

Moreover, more ingratiation was used in organisations with an autocratic style of management and leadership, where the flows of upward communication were muffled, such as Organisation B and E. On the contrary, in organisations where the leadership was more participative, and upward communication flowed, as in Organisation P, employees used lower degrees of ingratiation. *See Appendix 48.*

The analysis revealed that the use of ingratiation tactics is indeed considered useful by many of the participants for achieving career success (Judge and Bretz, 1994), particularly opinion conformity. For many of the participants it was regarded as a normal part of communication in the workplace. (See Chapter 4.5)

Many participants in the interviews believed that opinion conformity was similar to or the same as silence. The chapter will discuss this issue at a later stage and arrives at the conclusion that although silence and opinion conformity may share some characteristics, they are two different constructs.

5.1.3.4 Distance and Romance of Leadership (ROL)

The investigation of the variable of employee distance and ROL responds to the quest of the first research objective of making sense of the barriers and concerns that impede the flow of critical feedback.

Despite the arguments for the importance of the sway of followership by various researchers (Shamir et al., 2007; Mayo and Pastor, 2007; Giddens, 1979, 1981, 1984, 1991), the findings from this variable indicate that it is usually the management or the leadership of the organisation that initiate the tone and pulse of upward communication in the organisation. This is because of the inbuilt power configuration in most organisations; power resides mostly in its higher echelons (Foucault, 1980). This is so for all the four organisations studied.

Even in Organisation C, with its very relaxed open style of communication, power and authority rested with the Managing Director and the board of directors, who determined policy, set the tone for interaction and thus shaped the pulse of upward communication in the organisation. *See Chapter 4.4.*

However, the results noted a slight deviation in this finding. In Organisation B, although the Managing Director attempted to set the tone for open and enhanced internal communication through his communication strategies, the negative tone of upward communication came from the reaction of the employees to the downsizing that was going on in the organisation. Having said this, it may be argued that the downsizing was initiated by the management, and that therefore, management did indeed trigger the negative timbre of the upward communication of the organisation. Consistent with other studies (e.g. Tourish et. al., 2004), this research also adds significantly to the general literature on the negative consequences of downsizing; as a practice, downsizing distorts communication, damages trust and erodes loyalty in the organisations where it is applied. *See Chapter 4.4.*

The discussion in this variable suggests that the participants expressed a need to be close to their leader, psychically and physically. In Organisation E, there was a pronounced feeling of frustration and discontent from the employees that their CEO was not a leader who could be easily accessed, more so in their geographically dispersed offices. This impacted adversely on the upward communication of the organisation. In Organisation C, the Managing Director was perceived as a leader who was close at hand and within reach. This added to the already high level of wellbeing and contentment, which initiated and maintained the extraordinary high levels of good upward communication in the organisation. Thus it may be correctly intuited that subordinates who feel 'close' to their leaders, have less reservations in speaking up than those who are not. *See Chapter 4.4.*

But the practical viewpoint that emerges from the views of the participants is that good upward communication needs proximity to the leader and not distance. Thus, ROL, the romantic concept of the leader, generated through the distance of the subordinate from the leader, does not provide a sound or feasible base for honest and open upward communication. Distance, therefore, is not a constructive basis for good upward communication; the contrary would appear to be so. Furthermore, on the subject of ROL, romanticised beliefs and judgements of subordinates can, over the course of time, mutate into feelings of cynicism, distrust and estrangement, petrified by the sounds of silence:

*'People talking without speaking
People hearing without listening
People writing songs that voices never shared*

*No one dared ...
Disturb the sound of silence.* **Paul Simon (1966)**

Moreover, research has argued that the pulse of upward communication is inclined to be much more spontaneous and open in expressive networks and more muted in work related instrumental ones (Krackhardt and Porter, 1985; Tichy, Tushman and Frombrun, 1987). Findings from this study would indicate that this seems to be the case; Organisation C was the only organisation that had expressive frameworks in its work place. It is also the only organisation found to have 100% levels of good upward communication. It is suggested by the researcher that the existence of expressive frameworks increase the proliferation of social capital and thus help achieve this extraordinarily high percentage and quality in the levels of upward communication. *See Chapter 4. 4.*

Additionally, the analysis indicates that the leadership style of an organisation does impact powerfully on the pulse and pitch of upward communication. Quite simply, truly participative leadership facilitates and encourages its flow and despotic or autocratic leadership stifles or chokes it. In Organisation C, its Managing Director had a participative style of leadership and this impacted on the open and honest flow of upward communication in the organisation. In Organisations B and E, the leaders had an autocratic, authoritative style of leadership. They were regarded by their subordinates as arbitrary, dictatorial and repressive and, as a result, the upward communication in these two organisations was muffled, subdued, and skewed. Impression management and ingratiation were rampant, silence was rife and cynicism contaminated the ambience of the organisation. *See Chapter 4.4.*

5.1.3.5 Power, Hierarchy and Size

The discussion of the variable of how organisational power, size and hierarchical structure impacts on upward communication answers the first research objective of identifying the main factors that shape its flow. Like Klauss et al., (1978), Morrison (2000: 712) argued that ‘within tall organizational structures, top managers will be less likely to interact with, relate to, and, hence, trust lower-level employees.’ Moreover, organizational silence is likely to be more common in organizations with many hierarchical levels (Glaser, 1984). Organisation E and Organisation B were characterised by a tall hierarchy and indeed, experienced the syndrome of employee silence. Organisation C had a moderate hierarchy, and Organisation P had a bifurcated structure. As such, both of these organisations were probably affected to a lesser degree by this syndrome. *See Chapter 4.6.*

Writing on power, Stengel (2000) maintained that where there are asymmetrical relationships, as there are in organisations, there will also be subordinates attempting to ascend to a higher position and when this happens, there will be considerable use made of ingratiation tactics. All organisations have power based structures of some kind and it is quite impossible to escape this syndrome. However, it is the kind of management style with which power is deployed that impacts on how employees perceive the organisation.

For example, in Organisation B, where the high handed autocratic Managing Director was detested by his workforce, there was a clear sense of a divide between ‘us and

them'- of the vast area of little or no connection between management and operational staff. Organisation B was a fairly big organisation with a strong, structural hierarchy. Furthermore, the employees there were very conscious of the power differentials between them and top management. This impacted adversely on the flow of upward communication in the organisation. *See Chapter 4.6.*

On the other hand, although Organisation C had a moderate hierarchy and was a fairly big company, it was perceived by its employees as a family run business, probably because its members enjoyed the high comfort levels of a family business. They knew that their much respected Managing Director had a highly participative, fair management style. Although there was no doubt in their minds that power and authority resided in the hands of the Managing Director and the Board of Directors, the employees did not feel threatened or overpowered by it. On the other hand, they felt safe and confident that management would use this power also for their wellbeing. Levels of trust were high. Internal communication and upward communication flowed openly and without any filters or barriers. *See Chapter 4.6.*

The high-tech Organisation P was a small company and had a flatter hierarchy and bifurcated structure. The volatile Managing Director had a bad temper, which his staff had learnt to deal with; but he also tried hard to develop a participative style of management. He did make the effort to delegate a certain amount of power and responsibility to his subordinates. Hence, flows of upward communication were fairly good and unrestricted. *See Chapter 4.6.*

Organisation E was not a big company but it had an awkward configuration and a rigid hierarchical structure. From the analysis, it may be said that employees did not find it a happy place to work in. Even though they joked that the organisation was a 'benign autocracy', they were bewildered, and at times overwhelmed, by the autocratic management style of their CEO. Upward communication flows in this organisation were stilted and furtive, and swathed in an array of synthetic impression management and ingratiation tactics. *See Chapter 4.6.*

Power, authority and control - and their display in the workplace - therefore impacted on the flow of sound upward communication. If management power in the organisation is perceived by its employees to be immoderate or intemperate, upward communication does not flow, trust breaks down, levels of silence spin out of control, and the use by employees of impression management and ingratiation behaviours escalates. This was the case in Organisations B and E. In Organisation C, however, where employees were confident that the power and authority of management would not be used against them, upward communication flows, levels of trust were high and the use of impression management and ingratiation tactics was minimal. *See Chapter 4.6.*

Furthermore, companies that bring in top managers from the outside, instead of promoting from within, may be more likely to create a gap between top management and the rest of the organization (Morrison and Milliken, 2000). In Organisation B, the Managing Director was brought in from the outside and the negative perception of him from within the workforce partly reflected this. This was also the case in

Organisation E, formed by the clubbing together of four enterprise trusts, headed by a CEO, who was the Managing Director of one of the original enterprise trusts, totally unlike Organisations P and C, where the leaders were ‘home grown.’

However, all things considered, and given the impact that a power engorged hierarchy may have on upward communication, the analysis found that the size and structure, of the organisation alone was not a direct contributory factor to problems with upward communication. Organisation E was not a large organisation, but it suffered from one of the highest levels of distrust and the lowest levels of upward communication in the study. *See Chapter 4. 6.*

Therefore, the ‘height’ and intensity of the hierarchy would also appear to have a bearing on upward communication, as would the geographical set-up of the organisation. The leadership and management of the organisations also appear to impact significantly on the tenor of upward communication, as do major circumstantial phenomena, such as downsizing. *See Chapter 4.6.*

5.1.3.6 Downsizing

This variable responds to the second research objective of identifying the forces that may constrain and cripple upward communication in the organisation, restructuring being one of them. The analysis found that downsizing or restructuring was one such force.

Dowling (2006) has explained that corporate communications play three important roles. Firstly, external communication is designed to generate an understanding of the organization amongst its key stakeholder groups. Secondly, communication to the external world and society can explain an organisation's actions. Thirdly, internal communication has just as important a role to play; to reinforce the mission and morality of the company internally, and thus establish the main drivers of employee engagement, which leads to the creation of enhanced value and a good corporate reputation.

Sometimes, however, there occurs a serious dislocation in the internal communication of the company. In this study, the sensational new communication initiatives of the Managing Director of Organisation B proved to be a disappointment as they did not address the main problem that was troubling the minds and hearts of its employees, the downsizing and restructuring. This seriously compromised the flow of upward communication in the organisation (Cameron et al., 1991). It destroyed any sense of engagement with the mission and morality of the organisation and contaminated the trust that could have developed between management and the operational staff. *See Chapter 4.7.*

This created extraordinarily high levels of bitterness and cynicism in the minds of the employees. Trust vanished. An almost collective silence took hold. The climate of the organisation was characterised by fear, suspicion and anxiety. Opinion conformity as a tactic of ingratiation and impression management was excessively used, as a

safeguard against being singled out for downsizing. Levels of loyalty and the sense of belongingness were dismal. Upward communication almost ground to a halt.

Communication initiatives from management to explain the situation are supposed to help rebuilt social capital and improve the climate of the organisation at times of downsizing (Pfeil et al., 2003), but in this case, they did not have any impact because the employees looked upon them as fake and sham; they dealt with a multitude of random and insignificant issues but did not address the main quandary of downsizing.

In describing the origins of self-esteem theory, Korman (1970, 1976) emphasized the importance of messages from significant others which signal competence, capability, significance and value. When the general self esteem of employees in the organisation is high, upward communication flows and enhances the company's growth. Furthermore, when employees receive these messages, as in the case of Organisation C, upward communication is normal. There is no need to fake attitudes and this is good not only for the people concerned, the subordinate and the superior, but also for the wellbeing and prosperity of the organisation. In Organisation B, however, downsizing communicated the message to the employees that they were simply a resource to be assessed, rationalised and got rid of; it did nothing to improve the morale of the workforce or enhance communication; their 'self-esteem' levels were low – the workforce was stressed and unhappy. *See Chapter 4.7.*

Furthermore, organization-based self-esteem (OBSE) reflects an employee's evaluation of his or her personal adequacy and worthiness as an organizational

member (Gardner et al., 1998, 2001, 2004; Pierce et al., 1989). In the case of an organisation being downsized, levels of OBSE dive dismally and this was exactly what happened in the case of Organisation B. Instead of feeling positive, energized, valued and appreciated, employees believed that they had no significance as people who made a valuable contribution to the company, but were simply viewed as integers or numerals, devoid of any human intelligence, feeling, sensitivity, opinion or emotion. The downsizing in Organisation B dehumanised the organisation. In this insecure ambience, upward communication limped along, but lacked coherence, sincerity and flow. Cynicism grew and flourished; bitterness raised its ugly head and opinion conformity and silence characterised the internal communication in the workplace.

5.1.3.7 Gender

This variable responds to the second research objective of exploring the different factors that could impact on the flow of upward communication. Although critical management research recommends not taking gender into account in research (Gergen, 1991, 1994; Alvesson and Deetz, 2001), this study proceeded to find out if gender was indeed, a factor, which impacted on upward communication. *See Chapter 4.9.*

The analysis found that, firstly, women were more conscious of having a life apart from work; many of them were not really concerned about organisational problems, such as a dismal flow of upward communication, as much as the male employees were. Secondly, it found that women employees were not averse to using the

impression management tactic of other-enhancement to flatter their superordinate, particularly so if he was a man. Nor did they appear to have any qualms about flirting or using feminine wiles while communicating with their managers. *See Chapter 4.9.*

However, the perception that the women employees of Organisation E held of their Operations Director (a woman) was interesting. They regarded her as being even tougher and harsher than the CEO (a man), who was a dictatorial leader, and they paced their communications to her accordingly. Even more intriguingly, the Operations Director regarded herself in very much the same light as she was looked upon by the women employees; she admitted that she was ruthless, tough and hard in the business place because she needed to be perceived to be as robust as a man.

Therefore, this study maintains that gender is, indeed, a factor that shapes upward communication between a woman employee and a male superior; it is not rare to see many women employees use flattery, a coquettish manner, guile and womanly charms, to communicate upwards in their workplace with their male managers. *See Chapter 4.9.*

5.1.3.8 Culture

This part of the analysis addresses the objective of identifying the forces that shape upward communication. The analysis demonstrates that local culture may be one such force.

In Organisation C, particularly, many participants drew a parallel between the need for accord, balance and consensus that often exists in the North East of Scotland and the emphasis on conformity in the organisation. Seeking consensus was important even to the board of directors of Organisation C before they passed a resolution. Therefore, aggressively showing off while communicating or standing out from the crowd was not considered admirable qualities in Organisation C. Nor are they in the culture of Scotland. In the organisations researched, it was considered acceptable for an employee to position himself or herself constructively while conversing with the superior, but within a subtle balance and only to a certain acceptable degree. *See Chapter 4.8.*

Furthermore, the overt use of many of the tactics of impression management and ingratiation would be suspect in Scottish workplaces; indulging in ‘airs and graces’ (Craig, 2005) is not customary. An obvious and blatant use of impression and ingratiation management tactics is not valued or appreciated in Scotland (Craig, 2005). Furthermore, flattery is simply not part of the cultural psyche, and the giving of gifts even less so. As such ingratiation and impression management used during upward communication are not part of the Scottish ethos.

Thus, the analysis indicated that while culture was seen to influence upward communication in Organisation C, there was no conclusive evidence that it had the same effect in Organisations B, E and P. However, the researcher believes that with shifting demographics and the influence of diverse cultures, this picture is changing and the components of flattery, obsequiousness, deviousness and manipulation are

bound to begin to affect the palette of communication behaviours used in many organisations in Scotland. *See Chapter 4.9.*

Thus, the findings of the analysis complement the research aim and objectives. Accordingly, the main research aims and objectives of the research have been fulfilled

5.1.4 Implications of This Research For Leadership Theory

This research also challenges some of the main paradigms of leadership that have been popular in recent years. The literature regularly portrays leaders as ‘change masters’ (e.g. Kanter, 1985), heroes and saviours (see Hatch et. al., 2005, for a critical discussion) or miracle workers (see Slater, 1999). Leadership, in such accounts, is generally conceptualised as a unidirectional process, in which powerful actors (leaders) exercise control and influence over relatively passive subjects (followers).

Reinforcing this trend, the main leadership theory over the past two decades has been that of transformational leadership (Bass and Riggio, 2006). Charisma has been regarded widely as an indispensable ingredient of transformational leadership (Shamir et al., 1993; Bass, 1990). Commonly, a charismatic leader is assumed to energetically communicate ‘a vision’ for the organization. The leader’s vision seeks to stimulate action to achieve an idealised state (Strange and Mumford, 2002). It instils faith in a better future, creates personal commitment and provides a link between the interpretive orientations of leaders and those of their followers (Shamir et al., 2007). Charismatic

leaders 'by the force of their personal abilities are capable of having profound and extraordinary effects on followers' (House and Baetz, 1979: 339).

Generally, inspirational communication (often premised on high expectations by leaders of followers) is considered a vital means for a charismatic leader to effect changes in the attitudes of others, and hence to secure their commitment to an overall vision deemed to be in the common interest (Shamir, 1995; Conger and Kanungo, 1998; Waldman and Yammarino, 1999; Rafferty and Griffin, 2004). In particular, charismatic leaders seek to transform attitudes, values and behaviours by projecting 'extremely high levels of self-confidence, dominance, and a strong conviction in the moral righteousness of his/her beliefs' (House, 1977: 192). The predominant approach is both unitarist and uncritical. Morrison's (2003: 4) comments typify this approach:

'In the competitive world in which we live and work, leadership is required in every organization... We are witnessing the preparation of a new breed of change agents – individuals who know how to reorganize existing resources through innovative strategies, make rapid but well-thought-out decisions, and create collaborative work teams to enhance employee productivity.'

However, this research has ascertained that leaders and followers frequently have very different perspectives of what is happening in their organisations, of what is important, and - perhaps most crucially - of what they should do about it. It has explored some of the communicative processes whereby such different perspectives are generated and sustained. Organizational sensemaking is a contested, fraught, ambiguous and highly uncertain process, in which there are few guarantees that a common purpose and agenda will ever emerge. This perspective is consistent with the

numerous case study examples in Cooren, Taylor and Van Every's (2006) insightful edited text on the role of communication in organizing. It also reinforces the view that leadership is best thought of as an iterative, co-constructed and discursive phenomenon (Fairhurst, 2007). Followers construct leaders, just as much as leaders construct followers (Grint, 2005). The research discloses the complex communicative processes at the heart of leader-follower interactions, and the uncertainties intrinsic to such communication. For example, the dynamic of ingratiation and the concomitant tendency of self-efficacy biases on the part of leaders to ensure that they see such ingratiation as a more genuinely communicative act than it is, at the very least suggests that there may be some innate limits to the possibilities for open, fruitful communication in social contexts characterised by high status differentials. Yet, the transformational leadership models that have been current seem to rarely acknowledge the problems of such differentials, and such models are taught uncritically in many business schools. One clear implication of this research is that a greater attention to the communicative processes that characterise leader-follower relations would ameliorate some of the effects of such theories, and help in the development of more participative and inclusive models of the leadership processes, including less reliance on the need for charismatic leaders and the concentration of power in their hands. *See Chapter 4.4.*

This research has also discovered a connection between the style of management and leadership and the kind of upward communication, the pulse of ingratiation and impression management and the existence of cynicism, conformity and silence. *See Appendix 48.*

When the style of leadership is perceived by the employees of the organisation to be dictatorial, authoritative, or autocratic, as was the case in Organisations B and E, there existed high levels of ingratiation, impression management, conformity, cynicism and silence. Levels of trust were low. Upward communication was dislocated and filtered. The comfort levels of the employees in relation to their jobs and sense of belonging to the organisation were low.

On the other hand, when the management and leadership style of the organisation was perceived to be egalitarian, democratic and participative, comfort levels of the employees were high, as in Organisation C. Upward communication flowed openly. Levels of trust were high. The levels of ingratiation and impression management were high, as were the levels of cynicism, conformity and silence. This was in accord with the recent studies of Detert and Burris (in press) which indicated that managerial openness is most consistently related to voice. Furthermore, their research illustrated the importance of leaders in subordinate assessments of the risks of speaking up.

See Appendix 48.

5.1.5 Implications for Theorizing

‘Speaking is not the transmission of messages from a human sender to a human receiver, but the performance of speech acts in socially structured contexts to make meaning.’ (Varey, 2006: 182). In other words, meaning is iterative, contested, and co-constructed. It is therefore vital to study, as this research has attempted to do, the

disparate meanings which organizational actors attach to given sequences of events, and the accounts that they construct of those events.

A growing awareness of these dynamics means that communication is no longer seen as relatively peripheral to organizational life. Rather, it is increasingly viewed as the principal constitutive element in the process of organizing (Mumby and Stohl, 1996; Cooren et al., 2006). This recognition is, of course, itself contested. More functionalist and positivist perspectives continue to see organisational communication as relatively unproblematic – a process in which I say, you hear, you understand, you act. Thus, ‘Communication, in management thinking, is generally treated merely as a tool.’ (Varey: 2006: 184). However, as Deetz (1995) has argued, when information processing is equated with communication in a simplistic and linear fashion, sensitivity to broader political issues, which are frequently decisive, becomes neglected. This study has sought to avoid this problem, by paying due attention to the sensemaking processes whereby managers and employees conceptualize how communication flows upwards from those with relatively little power to those with a great deal of power. Theorizing the issue further, this research now proceeds to synthesize the findings of the research in the form of a model which integrates its key theoretical conjectures.

Weick (2006) described theories as tools of inquiry to be utilised in order to direct and stimulate observation. Theory development occurs as a result of the interaction between a number of interdependent variables; namely, direct observation, evaluation, theorising, and a refocusing of tools of enquiry. In the real world, the

process of theory development begins at any stage in this cycle; it is not a linear model of theory development. As Bertrand Russell (1961: 14) remarked, ‘Science tells us what we can know, but what we can know is little, and if we forget how much we cannot know, we become insensitive to many things of great importance.’

As Weick (1999: 386) observed, ‘Theory belongs to the family of words that includes *guess, speculation, supposition, conjecture, proposition, hypothesis, conception, explanation, and model*. The dictionaries permit us to use theory for anything from ‘guess’ to “a system of assumptions, accepted principles, and rules of procedure devised to analyse, predict or otherwise explain, the nature or behaviour of a specified set of phenomena (American Heritage Dictionary)”’.

The research now constructs a model on the main syndromes of upward communication that surfaced in the research, namely, opinion conformity, silence, and cynicism. The empirical evidence that was revealed in the analysis caused this study to look beyond the original proposition, how ingratiation and impression management might impact on upward communication, to the more powerful syndromes that are revealed to shape it in reality. As the research progressed and during the process of the analysis, the researcher discovered that apart from the pervasive use of opinion conformity, the syndrome of (employee) silence and the phenomenon of cynicism and the interrelationships between all three constructs needed to be considered.

5.1.5.1 The Model

The new model of the facets of upward communication was thus formed with the syndromes of conformity, silence and cynicism. The model called ‘The Conformity, Silence, and Cynicism Model of Upward Communication’ illustrates this new paradigm and brings a theoretical synthesis in what were previously disparate strands of organisation communication behaviour. Conformity is an active process; silence a passive process and cynicism a state of mind. When these constructs combine, or work in parallel, upward communication can be distorted fatally.

See Appendix 50: The Conformity-Silence-Cynicism Model Of The Syndromes Of Upward Communication

This model shows the three main syndromes of upward communication, as they surfaced in the research; opinion conformity, which is characterised by compliance, accord, and agreement for the sake of agreement; cynicism, which is marked by scepticism, distrust and scorn; and silence, where employees remain quiet, disengaged and non-responsive. All these are negative constructs and are not just harmful to the psyche of the employees, but also to the climate and well being of the organisation.

The arrows between syndromes of conformity, silence and cynicism show that they are analogous, and related; they impact, connect, overlap, coincide, complement and run parallel to each other, synchronously in the arena of internal organisation communication, especially upward communication. Although they are similar, they are different in the manner they are expressed.

Thus this thesis makes a distinct and significant contribution to knowledge or understanding on the area of upward communication. Furthermore, this study is original in the sense that it has researched upward communication thoroughly, within a qualitative interpretive analysis, through the prisms of impression theory and ingratiation management. Both these factors afford evidence of originality, as evinced by the discovery of new knowledge on upward communication, the new model and by the exercise of critical thinking. This chapter now proceeds to unpack the core elements of the model in more depth.

5.1.5.2 Conformity

Opinion conformity stands out as being one of the main tactics of ingratiation and impression management. It proved to be a powerful, pervasive, and persistent syndrome of upward communication, regardless of the issue in question, the size of organisation, or the leadership and management styles of the organisations. Moreover, other researchers on the tactics of verbal self-presentation agree that 'Opinion Conformity' is one of most commonly used forms of impression management used by subordinates when delivering upward communication (Jones, 1964; Wood and Mitchell, 1981; Gardner and Martinko, 1988; Tedeschi and Melburg, 1984; Wortman and Linsenmeier, 1977).

Many organisations indirectly solicit conformity on the part of their employees and managers. This creates a latent but nonetheless pervasive, embedded compliance to company criteria (Willmott, 1993). This is not a malign expectation; from the perspective of management, it ensures that their employees march to the same

drummer, which facilitates the creation of value. Even in Organisation C, where upward communication flowed without any aggravation, there was an accent on consensus, accord and compromise, even in the board room.

As a tactic of upward influence, opinion conformity takes different forms: the actor, in order to be accepted and liked, agrees or exaggerates how much he/she agrees with the superior or mirrors the personal style of the superordinate. An interlacing of opinion conformity in interactions with the superior can make every day life smoother for the subordinate. A remark from Participant E21-F-II-TS, says it all,

‘Doesn’t every boss prefer conformity? I think they do, of course they do...I don’t think he (the CEO) is any different. I think he genuinely would hear what we feel but if he did, he may not like it if he did; so it is better to conform and agree... He is very much the boss.’

From the point of view of the employee, it is important to be seen as playing by the rules of the organisation and conforming to the culture and values prescribed by management. From the other vantage point, the point of view of the management, Participant E2-F-I-TM explained:

‘To a certain extent, we all have to conform to the boss’s opinion... We have recruited people who have similar ideals and values. If you don’t fit, you don’t stay. We all have to have a similar vision and work towards that... If you don’t buy into that, you won’t fit in. So I guess there has to be a certain level of active opinion conformity from us to the boss and it is not a bad thing. It’s good to be part of the culture – working towards the same goals.’

Conformity is therefore, a very powerful construct in upward communication.

5.1.5.3 Silence

The other significant constructs that surfaced in the research was the syndrome of silence in upward communication.

Research has indicated that supervisors' attitudes, top management attitudes and communication opportunities within the organisation determine employee silence. These three dimensions are also associated with organisational commitment and job satisfaction (Vakola and Bouradas, 2005; Shenhar, 1990). Respondents in Milliken et al.,'s (2003) study also pointed to a variety of personal characteristics, organisational characteristics and relationship characteristics that affected their decision to remain silent.

The implications of these findings indicate that 'deciding to be silent about issues or concerns at work may be a fairly common choice for employees in organization' (Morrison and Milliken, 2000: 706). Speaking up about issues with superiors was also regarded as 'risky and futile' (Milliken et al., 2003: 1466). Participant E14-F-II-TS agreed,

'Remaining silent goes on a lot. A lot of people just want to get on with it, have a good life/work balance. Speaking up may not even make a difference, it may just endanger your job...'

Furthermore, Detert (2007: 24) pointed out that the perceived risks of speaking up were felt by the employees to be hazardous and precarious. On the other hand, the 'possible future benefit to the organization from sharing their ideas was uncertain. So, people often instinctively played it safe by keeping quiet. Their frequent conclusion seemed to be, 'When in doubt, keep your mouth shut.' Why? In a phrase, self-preservation.' This research also found, consistent with these earlier studies, that silence was an important element of upward communication.

5.1.5.4 Conformity and Silence

This part of the final chapter discusses whether opinion conformity, which is a common construct between the theories of ingratiation (Jones, 1964) and impression management, (Goffman, 1959) is identical to employee silence. The old English legal proverb maintains that silence means consent (Bond, 1936). As Pope Boniface VIII (1235 – 1303) said in Latin, ‘Qui tacet, consentire videtur’ which means, ‘silence gives consent.’

An intriguing issue surfaced during the course of the interviews: could a facet of opinion conformity as an upward influence tactic correspond closely to the issue of employee silence or unexpressed, displaced dissent: ‘...displaced dissent entails disagreeing without confronting or challenging’ (Kassing, 1998: 192). Therefore, by remaining silent and not disagreeing with the supervisor, could this mean that the subordinate is engaging in opinion conformity? As Participant B13-M-II-TL asked,

‘In law they say silence is taken as consent... to agree, to accept, and to conform. So, is opinion conformity the same as silence then?’

This section proceeds to discuss this question. As the CEO of Organisation E reasoned,

‘These two factors [silence and opinion conformity] are closely related ...The next level of ease is to be apparently voicing a contrary opinion but seeming to agree.’

All communication, both verbal and silent, can, sometimes, be indeterminate. Even the most lucid speech is, to some extent, ambiguous. Thus, opinion conformity as a

tactic of upward influence may be dishonest; it may even be sincere, its meaning may be clear or vague. However, it can be seen as,

‘...agreeing for agreement’s sake... Oh yes! And because of that, remaining silent...’ [C9-M-II-TL]

Similarly, research has recognized that the semantics of silence reveals different meanings. Krieger (1985) and Ennals (2007) put together a neat taxonomy on the silence, which helps shed light on the situation:

- **Silence as Conformity:** The most popular understanding of silence is that the absence or failure of one party to respond to another party implies assent. In the case of this research, it would be the response of silence of the employee to the communication of the manager. As the Managing Director of Organisation P elucidated:

‘Opinion conformity? You mean when people just nod their heads and say ‘yes’ when I am talking - yes, that happens...there is no doubt about it. That does happen - they will agree with me....It feeds into remaining silent, as it’s consent... Yes, it happens quite a lot ... even though I do my best to gather opinions from the boys, sometimes even act as a devil’s advocate, ask them...challenge them....’

Derrett and Duncan (1985) elucidated how silence actually came to mean assent. In A.D. 297, the Emperors Arcadius and Honorius enacted an amendment to the Roman law, which punished the guilty intent or ‘*mens rea*’ as well as the commission, of crimes. The law was published in the Theodosian Code 9.14.3, and is also found in the Coder of Justinian, 9.8.5. Bartolus and Baldus, medieval jurists (circa 1357), maintained that, at the time, since those who reveal a criminal conspiracy of this character were rewarded, the law, therefore, was taken to punish those who maintained a silence about the conspiracy. Hence, because the suspect remained silent

about reporting the criminal conspiracy, it was taken to mean that he had consented to it, was perhaps even complicit in it and therefore guilty. Hence, silence came to mean: acquiescence, acceptance or assent.

The old legal maxim, 'silence implies consent' reflects this notion. From his silence, a man's consent is inferred (Lord Coke, 1592). Coke (1592) further emphasized that like the English language, English law may be regarded as the fusion of two great cultural forces – Germanic folk laws, expressed in the early years of Aethelbert (circa 600) as the laws of Alfred and Canute; and the Roman law, as interpreted by the Norman conquerors and set forth in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries by Glanvill and Bracton (Bond, 1936). From this fusion, developed a body of law, which in its scope and influence, is probably without parallel in modern history. Many of its basic principles, like 'silence means consent' find expression in the common proverbial wisdom of mankind (Bond, 1936).

However, A.L.C. (1920) has noted that in the U.S., since the last two centuries, courts have often held that the maxim, silence is consent is *not* part of the law of contract. Nevertheless, authorities concur that staying silent for an unreasonable length of time, may be taken to mean as acceptance or consent (Cole-McIntyre-Norfleet and Co. v/s Holloway [1919, Tennessee]).

The following quotations from the employees of Organisation C reveal how remaining silent can be taken as opinion conformity:

‘Hmmm...when you agree with the boss’s opinion and really think differently, you are going with the flow... so you are remaining silent about your own thoughts in a way....., yes, staying silent and conforming as the same time... Yes, I could probably relate to that myself.’ [C29-F-III-TS]

‘Yes. Opinion conformity happens here, I do it all the time... I suppose it’s like remaining silent really ... seeming to be agreeing ... but in a way remaining silent about your own private opinions.’ [C19-M-II-TS]

‘Opinion conformity and silence are almost the same, in a way... when you conform to the boss’s opinion; you are also remaining silent about your own opinion; keeping it hidden...’ [C16-M-II-TL]

- **Silence as Reflection:** Silence can also reflect the communicator’s uncertainty about a situation without cluttering his/her response with words. It can also be an opportunity for the employee to reflect and clarify his/her thoughts before responding, if at all. As such, it can support tactics of upward influence used and, in a fractious work environment, secure a position of neutrality for the employee. A young and diffident employee from Organisation B said,

‘I felt so confused at the time when he [the line manager] was talking, I didn’t know what to say, so I just stayed quiet...’

- **Silence as Emotion:** At times, employees are overcome and rendered speechless and cannot articulate themselves. This happened, for instance, in Organisation B, when some employees received the news that they were being downsized. As Participant B24-F-II-TL said,

‘And when I was called to HR...and they told me... It was such a shock...I did not know what to say...I couldn’t speak...’

Silences like this can, nonetheless, communicate strong emotions: anguish, shock and confusion.

- **Silence as a Measure of Interpersonal Distance Signifying Disagreement:** In everyday upward communication in the organisation, language is used to develop and maintain connections between the subordinate and the superior. By refraining from speaking, the employee may convey the need for interpersonal distance, signifying disagreement. Depending on the circumstances, this expression of disengagement may even be used as a tactic of passive aggression.

‘I am one for remaining silent... rather than agreeing for the sake of it. Silence does not mean consent for me...no...So I wouldn’t agree if I didn’t agree - no opinion conformity for me... but I would stay very silent.’ [E10-F-II-TM]

Again, another employee in Organisation B ventured to say:

‘Yes, but I have seen opinion conformity a lot and the same people keeping quiet and silent all the time and agree with the boss. They don’t want to rock the boat. They don’t want to become a target. But as for me, when I agree, I speak up and do the opinion conformity thing; but when I disagree, I stay silent.’ [B30-M-III-TL]

Could this also possibly be interpreted as an expression of Kassing’s (1998) idea of ‘displaced dissent’?

- **Silence as a Mark of Respect:** Quite often, particularly in Asia and the Far East, silence, along with suitable accompanying body language, is often used a mark of respect and deference. Furthermore, Schlenker (1980) suggested that ‘face’ or self respect is identified as affecting a person’s dignity and poise, and the ability to maintain an appearance in public. Face has also been described as ‘one of an individual’s most sacred possessions’ (Deutsch, 1961: 897). As articulated by Goffman (1955), ‘keeping face’ or ‘face work’ refers to the subtle style in interpersonal encounters, found in all interactions, where the actor is intent upon

- **Silence as a Safety Net:** In an organisation, keeping silent is another way of not taking a stance and actually staying safe from trouble. They are neither agreeing nor disagreeing; they are playing safe. Silence becomes a sign of accord. In staying silent, they make it appear that they are agreeing with the superior, which may be seen as a variant of opinion conformity. This would seem to be the view of many employees:

‘Yes, there is opinion conformity everywhere– I can see that. I do it all the time too. But isn’t it the same as silence? You can’t say you disagree with your boss, so you conform to his ideas and remain silent ...’ [C29-F-III-TS]

‘Particularly I use silence and conformity too, quite a bit, as I am quite reflective. They are in a way the same thing I would say... These are some things I would employ a lot...’ [E7-M-II-TS]

‘Yes, many times I have felt like disagreeing with [line manager]...but I remained silent about it and just agree... I am very conformist and unadventurous. Don’t want to do the opinion conformity thing, so I keep silent. Keeps me out of harm’s way ...’ [E8-F-II-TM]

Even in Organisation P, where employee silence was not really a problem because of the innovative, creative nature of their component, the prevalent opinion conformity and the often accompanying silence is a quandary that irritates the Managing Director,

‘Remaining silent and opinion conformity - I think a lot of that goes on. I like to think I am approachable but I am also very busy, so maybe not as accessible as I could be.... But when I am there, particularly in the engineering meetings, I get very frustrated at the inability of the team to contribute their opinions, to say what they mean. I try to avoid taking possession of the decision but sometimes nothing is forthcoming and I will then move in. We are looking for opinions, contributions, assertive behaviour and we don’t always get that enough. One guy here rowed the Atlantic, but if you sat next to him and began to talk, you would have to coax things out of him. Maybe, as oil engineers, they just prefer to deal with the detail....’ [P7-M-I-TL]

Therefore, the use of silence is indefinite. Keeping silent may mean different things in different situations. It might mean consent or acceptance, it might not. It may even mean disinterest. Furthermore, it may erroneously be construed to be something that it is not. On the other hand, opinion conformity, particularly when it is expressed, however cautiously or tepidly, signifies agreement. Hence, the researcher deduces that opinion conformity and silence are separate and distinct constructs.

However, on a thought provoking note, the Managing Director of Organisation P brought up a common point between silence and opinion conformity that may have a negative effect on the effects of the organisation;

‘Opinion conformity is similar to silence, I think... There’s a lot of remaining silent and conformity that goes on in [the mother company] and it’s severely to the detriment of the company, when opinions and views remains unexpressed....., both opinion conformity and the silence thing do that...’ [P7-M-I-TL]

5.1.5.5 The Construct of Conformity

Clearly, all organisations need some norms of behaviour, and agreement about the vision they are seeking to achieve, or they would be incapable of functioning. Visions

have been defined as a set of beliefs about how people should act and interact to attain some idealised future state (Mumford, et al., 2002). They seek to establish cultures that rest on uniform values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours and in which alternative discourses are suppressed. It is therefore often argued that management needs to unite the organization around a strong idea, a shared vision, and then manage accordingly (Kunde and Cunningham, 1999).

In contemporary corporations, this is frequently facilitated by compelling visions of leaders seeking to attract the enthusiastic support of employees (Deal and Kennedy, 1982; 1999; Collins and Porras, 1995). Given that employees want a job and a position with some social meaning or social value, feel part of a larger community and live and work in an integrated fashion (Pfeffer, 2003), their tendency to comply is hardly surprising. While social psychological studies of organisational behaviour address leaders' attempts to secure followers' conformity, they argue that leaders can influence followers' conformity as an indirect means of increasing their commitment (Collinson, 2006). Therefore, the need for employee conformity may be said to be initiated from the upper echelons of management, who obligate their employees to follow and endorse the mission of the organisation.

On the other hand, this research argues that conformity is a construct that is also independently reinforced by the employees of a company, for their own personal reasons, often born of self – interest. This self-presentation is done through the use of upward influence tactics like impression management (Goffman, 1959) and

ingratiation theory (Jones, 1964) and the construct of conformity is reinforced by the employees almost to the same degree as it is made obligatory by management. As Participant B11-M-II-TS said,

‘These kinds of tactics on your chart help ease the hassles of our daily life... We work for a company and have to fit in to the values. And sometimes you have to park your personal beliefs...If none of us like it, we know where the door is. The same applies to me – if I don’t like it, I can go and work at Asda.’

Critical management thought suggested that free thinking and open expression are the zeitgeist in modern organisations (Willmott, 1993, 2003). In reality, however, the dynamic that surfaces from this analysis of the upward influence tactics is that while the leadership of the organisation encourages and obligates its members to conform (Peters and Waterman 1982), there is often, a simultaneous and concurrent impulse from employees to do so of their own volition, often through the use of ingratiation (Jones, 1964) and impression management (Goffman, 1959). The analysis of upward influence tactics used by the employees of the four organisations illustrates the significance of conformity in the organisation milieu.

See Appendix 49: The Construct of Conformity

This diagram on ‘The Construct of Conformity’ illustrates this phenomenon: top management obligates its employees to conform to the company mission and the employees of the organisation thus conform, for their own reasons. This results in the construct of conformity, buttressed on both sides by analogous forces from opposite directions, from the management and also from the workforce.

5.1.4.6 Cynicism

Another major construct of upward communication that was not initially part of the original aim and objectives but which stood out conspicuously during the interviews was the issue of employee cynicism, which surfaced as a tenacious refrain in the participants' narratives. Ultimately, people need jobs to earn their livelihood; they are aware of the limitations of their power in the organisation. Roscigno and Hodson (2004: 701) argued that 'workers want to work efficiently and be productive. When they are allowed the opportunity to do so by coherent organisational practices and by the solicitation of employee involvement, organisations prosper and dignity at work is maximized.' However difficult circumstances might be, people remain in the employment of the organisation, they toe the line. In doing do, a certain degree of scepticism is born and propagates in their minds and hearts.

Nietzsche (1844-1900) said, 'Cynicism is the only form in which base souls approach honesty.' Within the arena of the organisation, Dean et al., (1998: 345) have defined cynicism as a 'negative attitude towards one's employing organisation comprising three dimensions: (1) a belief that the organisation lacks integrity; (2) negative affect towards the organisation; and (3) tendencies to disparaging and critical behaviour toward the organisation that are consistent with these beliefs and effect.' Oscar Wilde (1854-1900) expressed the essence of cynicism in a sentence, 'A cynic is a man who knows the price of everything but the value of nothing.'

As Naus et al., (2004: 685) explained, '...organisation strategies that bring job insecurity thorough downsizing and restructuring seem to invariably work against the

interests of the employees.’ In the case of Organisation B, this dynamic was further complicated by the fact that the organisation strategies of the Managing Director did not address the issue of downsizing while the company was becoming given more profitable. Furthermore, the ‘apparent inconsistency between words and deeds raises the crucial question whether organisation success and worker well-being and dignity are complimentary or contradictory’ (Roscigno and Hodson, 2004). The result was a high degree of employee cynicism, which impacted unfavourably on upward communication.

Like employee silence, conformity has:

‘profound organisational implications for both the individual and the organisation ... The key to organisation cynicism is that the organisation lacks integrity... beliefs formed about the organisation due to perceptions or experiences of untruthful or unfair dealing, a lack of upright ness, dishonesty or insincerity, may give rise to organisational cynicism’ (Naus et al., 2004: 684).

In Organisation C, the opposite was the case, where especially the Managing Director and the other directors of the company were greatly respected for their integrity and admired for their sincerity and straightforwardness. In Organisation B, on the other hand, the CEO was regarded as a devious man, who presented the growing, glossy and successful side of the organisation to the press and media of the area, as a means of getting more recognition for his personal achievements from the mother company, while at the same time, endorsing and activating a process of downsizing in the organisation, a matter that had not been addressed in his flamboyant new communication strategy. Hence, a very high degree of organisation cynicism was apparent in the interviews with staff. They conformed and did their work but upward

communication streams were muted and synthetic. This results in ‘unmet expectations of meaningfulness, and an unmet need for self-fulfilment and growth, bringing about disappointment and disillusionment’ (Naus et al., 2004: 690). Finally, in as much as it is a behaviour born of disappointment, disillusionment and discontent, cynicism has a formidable negative impact on the flow of honest and open upward communication in the organisation.

Thus, and flowing from the empirical material in this thesis, the model demonstrates the interrelationship between conformity, silence and cynicism in the dynamics of upward communication.

5.1.6 The Methodology: Limitations, Constraints And Compromises

This section deals with the suitability of the methodology selected, in response to the last objective of the research. To conclude, the limitations of the study are also discussed in detail.

The research has used a qualitative interpretive methodology, to suit the sensitive refrain of the main objective of the study. However, all forms of research have intrinsic constraints and limitations (Gelso, 1979). Organisational research is particularly complex and often chaotic. Buchanan et al., (1998: 54) observed,

‘... the members of organisations block access to information, constrain the time allowed for interviews, go on holiday and join other organisations, in the middle of your unfinished study. In the conflict between the desirable and the possible, the possible always wins.’

This part of the chapter, therefore, addresses the constraints of the methodology and research design and examines the compromises made to compensate for them. The limitations of the interviews and the imperfect degree of validity of the data are discussed, as is the fact that upward communication and the ingratiation and impression management techniques used to convey it are but a small part of the total whole of the communication dynamics in an organisation. Furthermore, the impossibility of achieving absolute 'objectivity' is explored and the biases of the researcher and the interviewees, which could have somewhat unwittingly, skewed the inferences drawn from the data, considered.

5.1.6.1 The Limitations Of A Snapshot Analysis

A study of upward communication in an organisation is but one dimensional snapshot of the dynamic and changing face of the organisation. A great deal of research is pushed by some theoretical construct or angle. Under the scrutiny of such narrow focus lenses, organisations look distorted and warped: 'Narrow concepts are no better than narrow techniques. Organisations do not need to be hit over the head with either...' (Mintzberg, 2005: 366). With this in mind, it must be agreed that upward communication in an organisation and the use of impression management techniques by subordinates are but two such narrow facets of organisational behaviour which has a multitude of equally significant dimensions. As such, this study needs to be looked upon as an in-depth examination of one facet of organisational life, a ripple in the vast ocean of organisational behaviour or a point of time, captured in the annals of the

four organisations. This is one of its more obvious but nonetheless unavoidable limitations.

Consistent with this approach, Mintzberg (2005: 365) has stressed the need to ‘have to connect and disconnect.’ Moreover, as he has insisted, ‘...being objective is vital, but proximity to the essence of the data needs to be maintained at the same time.’ This would mean that the researcher needs to get as close to the phenomena as is possible in digging out the inputs (data, stories) and then be able to step back to make something interesting out of them.

However, as discussed before during the course of this chapter, the main question is whether absolute objectivity was possible in the context of this study. Carspecken (1996) has argued that a prerequisite understanding of the nature and scope of qualitative inquiry reveals the problem inherent in it – the impossibility of total objectivity. Understanding the diverse complexities, the requisite variety, of qualitative inquiry not only challenges the methodological uniformity necessitated by this task; it reveals the epistemological and ontological limits of such an endeavour.

Moreover there are many different nuances and shades of self-awareness not just in data collection and interviews but also in the interviewee’s perception of upward communication. There are variations in how much people engage in upward communication when using impression management tactics. Sometimes, they may be genuinely unaware that they are doing so. Then again, they may intend to do so; it may make the impression they intend it to although it may not come across as

effectively as intended. At other times, the subordinate is unaware of how obvious the impression management really is.

In as much as this is so, where do rhetoric and reality diverge? Is there a convergence between presentation and reality? A characterisation of the same event or unit of upward communication may differ very widely; an individual's role in 'an understanding can provide him with a distinctive evaluative assessment of what sort of an instance of the type of particular understanding was' (Goffman, 1959:9).

Such ambiguity is, however, inherent to all discursive phenomena (Fairhurst, 2007; Cooren et al., 2006). In general, the search for an absolute and shared understanding of the relationship between the signifier and the signified proves elusive (Saussure, 1916/ Cullar, 1976).

Reissman's work (1993, 2001) on narrative analysis has established the impossibility of having a totally sterile, clinically objective analysis, 'In sum, my personal narrative is implicated in this book about narrative analysis. I have a point of view and a network of relationships that influences the ideas presented here... It is impossible to view any topic from outside...' (Reissman, 1993: vii).

Total and absolute objectivity is, therefore, an unrealistic ambition within the narrative and sense making approaches. Sensemaking often leads in an anthropological and ethnographic direction. It is heavily impregnated with self-referentiality, where people tell things from their own point of view, deliberately or unconsciously. Self-referentiality and the self-concept are central to the matter of

identity, and, in situations where people interviewed in organisations can be persuaded to talk about and states, self-referentiality and self-concept pervade the created texts (Hannabus, 2002).

Alvesson and Deetz (2001: 89) have clearly emphasised:

‘The researcher’s attitudes, or point of view... [are] strong influences in any research. It is a well documented characteristic of human beings that most of us tend to see what we’re looking for, and as a consequence, data are often influenced by our point of view. Qualitative research is often vulnerable to this kind of distortion, and when we evaluate it, we should be especially aware of it.’

To deny this would be to deny that we are human, with all the strengths and frailties it entails.

However, it has been suggested that the way to remove the element of bias from the data-gathering process would be to objectify data and attempt to remove personal bias, by frankly acknowledging it and making some adjustments. This is easier said than done. ‘Confusing fact and value has historically created terrible problems’ (Alvesson and Deetz, 2001: 89).

To follow this thought further, another interpretive option is to draw attention to ambiguity: confusion and uncertainties that are persistent and thus do not seem to be absolved with more information. Quite often, people (interviewees) show neither clear consistency nor apparent diversity in how they express themselves on a specific theme; their accounts may be characterised by a high level of ambiguity. Furthermore, as Alvesson and Deetz (2001) have pointed out, they may express

themselves vaguely or incoherently, run along associative lines of argumentation/storytelling which makes it difficult to follow them, or they make be uncertain about a particular theme, lack adequate vocabulary and so on. The researcher has understood that this makes the ideal of reaching definite, absolute conclusions a vain, futile ineffectuality.

Furthermore, looking back at the work of Habermas (1990), rationality consists of three value spheres (cognitive, moral and aesthetic), 'each with its own type of validity claim, suggesting alternative ways of presenting the propositional content' (Heath, 1996: 116). Therefore, when an interviewee talked to the researcher, he or she may be simultaneously making appeals to each kind of validity: the truth of the statement (cognitive), the rightness of the statement (moral) and the truthfulness or sincerity of the statement, (aesthetic). In an earlier work, Habermas (1979) discussed four validity claims; the fourth claim is the 'intelligibility of the utterance' (Meisenbach, 2006: 58), which means that the listener must be able to understand the utterance being articulated. However, Meisenbach (2006: 58) has clarified, 'individuals frequently imbue more than one meaning or intent in the same utterance. Therefore, I maintain the stance that speakers simultaneously raise all three claims to validity in utterances.' Ambiguity and imprecision thus need to be accepted as a normal characteristic of the nature of human discourse.

Furthermore, 'patterns as well as variety need to be understood from the interviews. Neither should be privileged. Pattern seeking often leads to a suppression of variety' (Alvesson and Deetz, 2001: 148). This may well be acceptable and necessary in order

to understand what appears to be dominant, but it must be done with openness and care of what is hidden (diversity). As Mintzberg (2005: 367) has said,

‘Cherish anomalies.... As you order your notes, it is of course quite nice when things fall into place....And then comes this nasty note: some observation, idea or example that simply refuses to fit.....keep these notes, cherish them.... Be a bulldog....if you can come to grips with the anomaly, you may have something big. ...The poet, W.B. Yeats (1902), captured this sentiment perfectly, “We made out of our quarrels with others rhetoric, but out of our quarrels with ourselves poetry.”’

The researcher has therefore tried to be wary of overly neat connections and simplistic configurations in the analysis.

5.1.6.2 Biases And Their Impact

The inherent biases present in the researcher as a human being also cast their long shadows on the manner in which the data was collected and interpreted. This has the result of further warping, albeit unintentionally, the analysis of the research. Bazerman (1998, 2000) has provided evidence that it is psychologically impossible for authors of a study or auditors (in communication or financial audits) to maintain their objectivity. Psychologists call this the self serving bias (Messick and Sentis, 1979, 1983, 1985; Walster and Walster 1975). Individuals first determine their preference for a certain outcome on the basis of their self interest and position and then justify that preference on the basis of their fairness by changing the importance of attributes affecting what is fair and right. Indeed, in this study, the researcher was looking for suggestions in the interviews to associate upward communication with impression management and ingratiation theory. This did not happen as neatly as had been imagined. In fact the investigation threw up other factors that impacted as

forcefully on upward communication as opinion conformity, one of the facets of ingratiation theory and impression management. Therefore,

‘the problem lies not in our desire to be unfair and self-seeking but our inability to interpret information in an unbiased manner... Self serving biases exist as a result of the fact that humans are imperfect information processors. People tend to confuse what is personally beneficial with what is fair or moral’ (Bazerman, 1988:1-2).

The researcher has noted what Bazerman (1998) recommends, that the researcher or author audits her perceptions and identifies the biases that could affect her. Cognitive biases occur in situations in which a heuristic is inappropriately applied or relied upon, with the result that faulty conclusions are drawn. Biases emanating from the Availability Heuristic are the ease of recall, which interviewees were perhaps, subject to, when events are remembered only because they are recent and therefore vivid. Working from memory, vivid employee experiences are more easily recalled, appear more numerous and are weighted with great significance.

Another bias that could have affected the narratives of the interviewees is the hindsight bias (Fischhoff, 2000). Human beings tend to overestimate what they knew and distort their beliefs about what they knew beforehand based on what they later found out. This phenomenon occurs when people look back on the actions of others, as well as of themselves. It is possible that some of the narratives of the interviewees could have been tainted by the hindsight bias.

Closely related to the hindsight bias is the ‘curse of knowledge’ which argues that people are unable to ignore knowledge that they have that others do not have

(Camerer, Loewenstein, and Weber, 1989). Their sophistication gets in the way. This is why it has been important that the researcher explained, in minute detail, to the interviewees, the purpose and scope of the study; it could not be presumed that they would have an intuitive grasp of the concepts being explored. This was discovered by experience. The interviews of the pilot study were not as rich in data as the subsequent ones because the study was not explained to the interviewees with sufficient detail, as it should have been, and as the pilot study demonstrated was necessary.

The motivational biases include the positive illusions people have about themselves and the self-serving ways they often exaggerate their own qualities. This bias was important to keep in mind when interpreting the narratives of the interviewees. Individuals tend to perceive themselves as being better than others on a variety of desirable attributes (Brown, 1986; Goethals, 1986; Goethals et al., 1991; Van Boven, 2000), causing them to have unrealistically positive evaluations of themselves across a wide range of social and organisational contexts. Milliken et al., (2003) has mentioned the social desirability bias which she felt crept into her study, whereby respondents portray themselves in positive ways. This feeds into the impression management techniques the interviewees might have used to come across and knowledgeable and confident to the interviewer, particularly on the level of interviews with the management of the four organisations. The motivational bias causes respondents to perceive themselves as being better than others across a number of traits, including honesty, rationality, intelligence and social skills (Babcock and Loewenstein, 1997).

Furthermore, Taylor (1983, 1989, and 1991) has argued that most people view themselves, their world and the future in a considerably more positive light than is objectively likely or that reality can bear out. Taylor and Brown (1988) have argued that positive illusions enhance and protect self esteem, increase personal contentment, help individuals cope with tasks and aversive events. This might have caused the interviewees to bathe their narratives in illusions positive to themselves, which again skews the validity of the research.

Bazerman's (1998) strategies for de-biasing have echoes of Sandberg's (1994) phenomenological epoché. He recommends 'unfreezing' perceptions, changing them and then 'refreezing' them – and so mentally institutionalising them into almost intuitive research strategies.

5.1.6.3 Problems with Access

All management researchers encounter problems with access. Ideally, the researcher may wish to choose the site for his or her study without constraint, picking the ideal case company and the parts of it that appear to be of most interest and relevance, being free to talk to any person about any issue, and having no restrictions in terms of participating and observing everyday work life. A company may not want to let a researcher in for various reasons. Introducing and guiding the researcher takes time and energy, participating in interviews takes even more. As Easterby-Smith (1990) pointed out, one of the characteristics of managers is that they are extremely busy. This makes interviews difficult. As Alvesson and Deetz, (2001: 194) expressed it,

‘Moreover, projected research results may not be perceived as very useful for allowing access, and may even be seen as directly negative for them and the company. Why should corporate managers allow a valuable corporate resource - time - to be used against their own and maybe the company’s interest?’

Undoubtedly, the most common qualitative method is the loosely structured interview (Kvale, 1996, Easterby-Smith, 1990); Downs and Adrian, 2004). The interview is a difficult but highly useful method for getting valuable information and viewpoints from people living in the reality one is interested in. Since many researchers define qualitative research as dealing with meaningful phenomena, interviews become indispensable.

There exists a diversity of opinion about whether or not interviews can be used to adequately and satisfactorily tap into subjects’ experiences, feelings, observations and values (Silverman, 2000). Alvesson and Deetz’s (2001: 194) response was that one has to manoeuvre between ‘two unhelpful settings’:

‘The first is the naïve humanism assuming that there is a pre-fabricated set of feelings, experiences and knowledge, what the qualified researcher, through interactive skills, can truthfully capture on the tape-recorder. The second is the hyper-scepticism and too narrow-focus which assumes that human beings are necessarily tightly restricted by rules for language use, and conformist adaptation to scripts and norms for how one expresses oneself in a particular situation. Social context (for example, the interview situation) matters for the accounts produced by an interviewee. And language does not simply mirror people’s minds or social reality.’

These are complications that need to be taken into account when appreciating interview accounts, but interviews may still give rich, imaginative indications of how a person may feel, think, reflect and tell an interviewer something valuable about what goes on in the organisation. The material is seldom innocent or can be

processed; it is therefore never pure. All interview material, therefore, calls for careful critical reflection. In this study, they have been interpreted in terms of possible qualities going beyond script-following accounts and impression management.

5.1.7 Suggestions for Future Research

From the deviances and anomalies that this research uncovered, it is suggested that the following further research could be helpful:

- An investigation into the differences and similarities between ingratiation/impression behaviours and the construct of cynicism. The researcher is of the view that although these behaviours may be similar, they have vastly different approaches and attitudes.
- The construct of conformity, whether it is instigated from the management or the staff, or both, is an important facet of the psyche of organisational behaviour and also a subject for future research.
- A comparative study into the similarities and differences between opinion conformity and silence.
- This research has revealed another area for investigation, the paradox between the distance crucial to ROL on one hand, and the need for employees to feel a physical and psychological closeness with their leaders to thoroughly engage with them, on the other.

5.1.8 Conclusion

Eisenberg (2007) has viewed organisations as arenas of human action where people struggle for power, clarity and voice. His rejoinder to the dilemmas of upward communication is to recognize that communication problems are endemic to all relationships and thus, ultimately, incapable of complete resolution. Thus, ‘strategic ambiguity fosters the existence of multiple viewpoints in organizations’ (Eisenberg, 2007: 9). Furthermore, his response is to embrace diversity within the milieu of the organisation, with a view to encouraging both co-operation and individuation, and therefore to accept that the elimination of differences is neither possible nor essential. The challenge, from Eisenberg’s perspective, is to endorse ‘empathy for different ideas, opinions, and worldviews’ (2007: 126), rather than seeking to eradicate them, either by persuasion or coercion.

This research has thus explored the dynamics of upward communication in four different organisations, and drawn its conclusions from detailed interviews with 105 employees. A host of variables have been explored in-depth. In the process, a new theoretical synthesis of opinion conformity, silence and cynicism has been proposed. Inevitably, there are limitations and constraints in the research, and these also have been explored. Overall, the key aim has been achieved – that is, our understanding of the dynamics of upward communication in organisations (an issue of major concern to managers, employees and academics studying communicative dynamics in the workplace) has been enriched.

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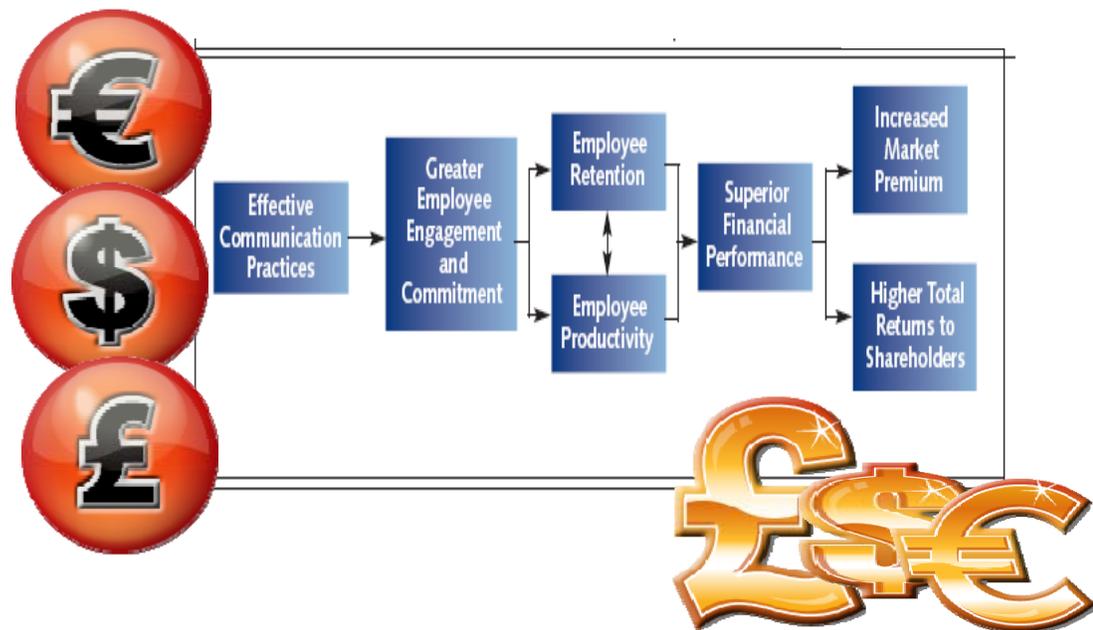
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Appendix 1: Good Communication Practices Drive Superior Financial Performance

(Adapted from the Watson Wyatt Study, 2005/2006)

COMMUNICATION EFFECTIVENESS DRIVES SUPERIOR FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE

(Watson Wyatt 2005/2006 Study)



Appendix 2: Birmingham University And The Culture Of Fear

From: The Times Higher Education Supplement, 21 January 2007, Page 4.

'Punishing' style puts staff on critical list

Phil Baty

Published: 19 January 2007

Whistleblower investigates

Academics at Birmingham's School of Health Sciences feel 'failed' by senior management who, a leaked report shows, were slow to address 'rock-bottom morale' and a 'culture of fear'. Phil Baty dissects the bones of contention.

"I have the sense of a school that is divided, where many staff feel isolated and unfairly treated... "Everyone is aware of the tension, pressure, even anger that exists between different groups and individuals".

This is the conclusion of a report on Birmingham University's School of Health Sciences that is so sensitive that the university refused to even confirm its existence when *The Times Higher* asked to see it under the Freedom of Information Act.

The report, which was leaked to *The Times Higher* this week, paints a damning picture of a school at war. It raises serious questions about the state of personnel management at the university and the future of the school.

Stuart Hunt, a human resources consultant, produced the report, which was handed to staff in the school in August 2006. It reports the results of a consultation exercise that involved 22 staff in "focus groups" and one-to-one interviews at the school and "several" further direct contributions to Mr Hunt.

The local branch of the University and College Union had suggested that disgruntled staff boycotted the consultation for fear of victimisation, but the paper, however, concludes that an "excellent level of engagement... should mean that the findings... are valid".

The report identifies a number of "key issues". "Leadership and management style is at the heart of much of the unhappiness that was expressed by the majority of respondents," it says.

A clear split emerges between a minority of staff - described as an "inner circle" - who are happy in their work and a majority who feel bullied, isolated and discriminated against.

The report says that although some staff felt recruitment processes to be "reasonably sound", many others found them to be "flawed". Staff expressed

"deep concern about the fairness and transparency" of the promotions process.

They also said favouritism was shown in the allocation of tasks, the granting of permission to attend conferences and the handling of promotion opportunities.

The management was said to be supportive by some staff, but many more felt that the systems and the management style were "much too controlling, even punishing". The report says: "Although several staff explicitly said they had not experienced or witnessed bullying, many more comments contradicted this."

Some staff said feedback and performance management were "punitive", and nearly all considered communications to be poor.

The school, founded in 1995, combines nursing and physiotherapy. For most all of its time, it has been headed by Pat Wrightson, a professor of physiotherapy. It has 63 academic staff and 22 academic-related and support staff who are responsible for more than 500 undergraduate students, 87 taught postgraduates and 15 postgraduate research students.

Nursing received a 3b rating in the 2001 research assessment exercise. The Hunt report highlighted staff fears that the school's problems could further damage its profile and even threaten its survival in a university committed to top-rated research.

Staff blamed high workloads for cutting into research time. The report says some staff felt that teaching and administration was valued more highly than research.

"There is significant concern about personal job security and about the future of the school as a whole, especially in relation to the vice-chancellor's statements about (the need for) research excellence," Hunt says.

The report highlights major staff concerns about five general aspects of work - leadership, professional and career development, communications, management, recruitment and promotion. In each of these areas, between 75 per cent and 90 per cent of all comments made were "negative".

These areas, the report said, "should be seen as highly significant to address".

The university this week released a statement to *The Times Higher* in which it said that the consultation and meetings with staff have allowed the university to "develop additional responses to address staff concerns".

In particular, "leadership training" for staff at various levels has been implemented.

Staff in the school were due to meet Mr Hunt this week, as *The Times Higher* went to press, to agree "some key actions" to help develop "a framework for collegiate leadership" in the school, according to a leaked memo.

The Hunt report concludes: "Finally, nearly half of respondents made comments

relating to the sense that the university centrally has not supported the school... effectively."

Certainly, the university had clear warnings of the emerging crisis. In October 2005 - almost a year before the Hunt report and as Professor Wrightson's second five-year term of office was coming towards an end - 17 members of academic staff wrote to the head of personnel, Jane Usherwood, raising concerns about how the school was being managed.

The letter, which was followed by a similar one in summer 2006 to the vice-chancellor, stated explicitly that it would not be "appropriate" to reappoint Professor Wrightson because of a number of "significant concerns about the current management style and the relationships within the school, which have led to inequitable workload distribution and inconsistent promotion decisions".

It reported that 12 staff had resigned in the previous three years - six of them "within the last few months" - and referred to "widespread concern that we may not be able to deliver existing courses, nor that we will be returnable in the next RAE". But as the Hunt report noted almost a year later, five staff asked: "What happened to the letter... there was no response, no feedback."

A major warning - described by one staff member as a "huge emergency siren" - came in the form of an October 2005 staff "stress survey" that highlighted the same issues as Hunt, but almost a year earlier. This survey, obtained by *The Times Higher* under the Freedom of Information Act, showed staff reporting "a culture of fear" and "rock-bottom morale" in health sciences.

Some 47 staff in the school, including 41 academics, participated in the survey. They reported that promotion and job opportunities were "unfair", that the school suffered from a "blaming culture" and an "unrewarding social climate", and that they suffered "low autonomy, insufficient participation and a sense of lack of control". The report, by consultants Applied Research Limited, recommended an "urgent" investigation into allegations of bullying and favouritism and said that "organisational interventions... are urgently required".

But nine months after the survey was completed, the Birmingham UCU was bemoaning the lack of action. A submission from the Birmingham UCU to a July 10, 2006, meeting of the university stress review group said: "It is no exaggeration to say that UCU members in health sciences are at the end of their tethers. They are asking how much more time it takes for the university to act to address the problem."

In the same month, 15 school staff complained in a letter to the vice-chancellor of a "lack of strategic planning", a "climate of low morale" and "raised stress levels".

Michael Clarke, the vice-principal, replied 18 days later, on July 28, rejecting their request for a meeting but saying that the vice chancellor would "take into consideration" their views about leadership when deciding on the future headship

of the school.

Just four days after that, Professor Clarke told the school: "Professor Wrightson has agreed to continue as head of the school. Both Pat and the vice chancellor recognise there are significant issues to be resolved...

about the future direction of the school." This should be taken forward by staff "working constructively together". But Professor Wrightson's new term would run only until March 31, 2007, he said.

In a statement this week, the UCU branch said that it had been aware of "serious problems" in the school for several years.

It said: "Some of our members in the school have been off work with stress-related illnesses, and many of them have been afraid to raise their concerns with the university for fear of victimisation.

"Members have also expressed anxiety about their future careers because the perceived absence of a clear research strategy has apparently made the prospect of an RAE return in this round unlikely."

As one member of staff who did not want to be named said: "The university has failed us. They had the stress survey and did nothing for a year. Then they sent in a consultant to find out what the problem was when they knew the problem all along.

"It is very sad. There is a lot of enthusiasm and ability and potential, but we've just been ground into the ground."

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STAFF CLAIMS

"You don't get promoted unless you are part of the 'favoured few' and your face fits." Eight people shared these sentiments.

"My sense is that everything is designed to support the 'inner circle'."

The report said that this term was "used by several people".

"Criteria for promotion are fixed so that only certain individuals can meet them". Five people expressed this view.

"Some people are allowed to go to international events and others are not - this is a favouritism issue." Four staff repeated such sentiments.

"We are desperate for help. We are vacillating between despair and anger."

"There has to be a change in leadership."

Source: the Hunt report

THE BIRMINGHAM RESPONSE IN FULL

"Birmingham University, as a responsible employer, conducts periodic reviews of stress in its schools. As a result of findings of the 2005 stress survey in the School of Health Sciences, the university, in consultation with the school, commissioned a further review from an independent consultant.

"This was intended to provide a more detailed insight into issues raised in the original survey. The university considers the results of both to be confidential, other than to its senior management group and the appropriate staff in the school concerned.

"The findings of both reviews and meetings with staff have enabled the university to develop additional responses to address staff concerns. One such response is to implement a package of leadership training for differing levels throughout the school.

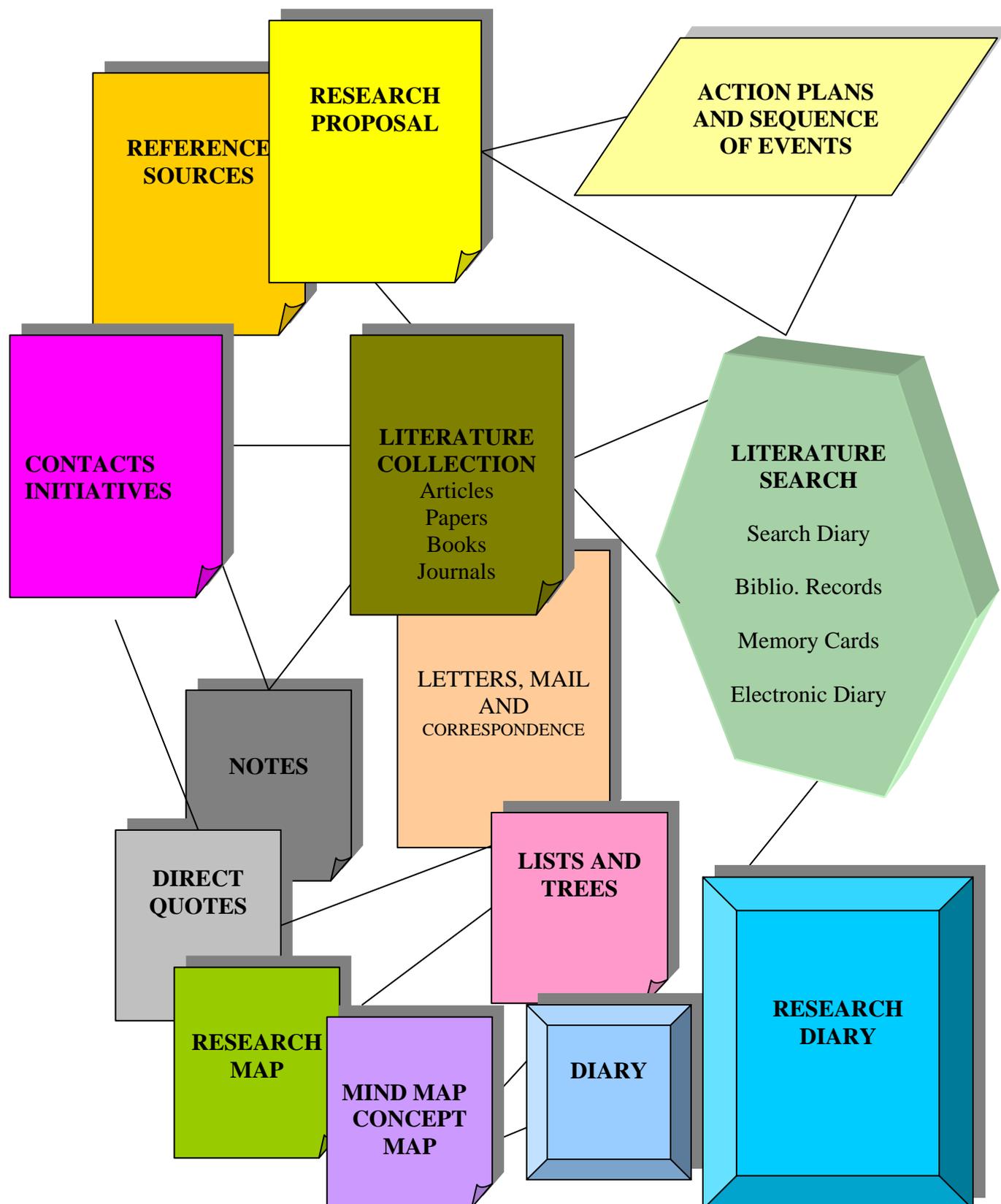
"The university has every confidence in Professor Pat Wrightson, the head of school, who was recently reappointed by council following the normal procedure of consultation with the school.

"The university will not comment further on specific personal cases."

Professor Wrightson declined to add any additional comments beyond the university's official response.

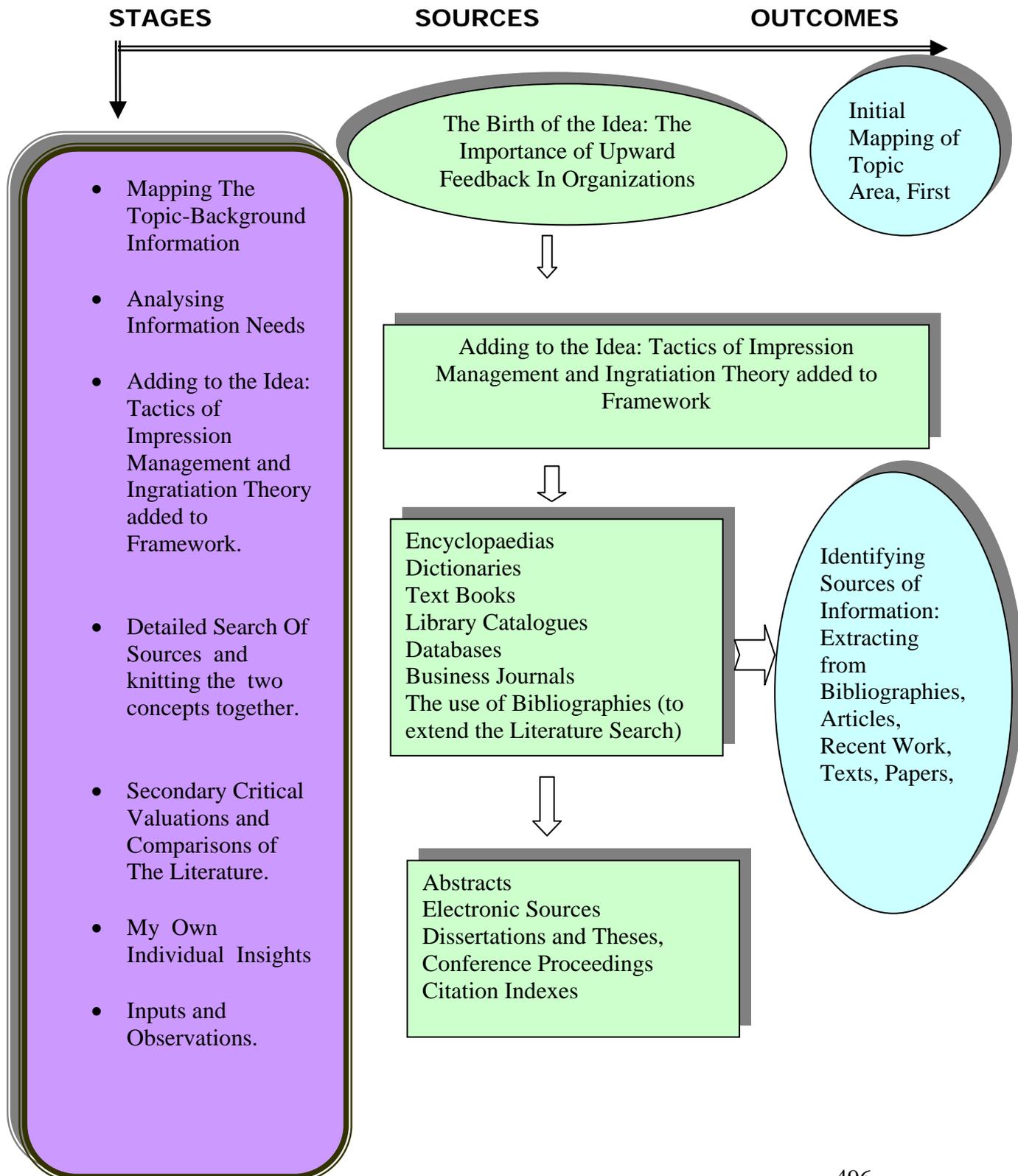
Appendix 3: Doing The Literature Review

Adapted from Doing a Literature Review, Chris Hart (1998: 217)



Appendix 4: The Flow Of the Literature Review

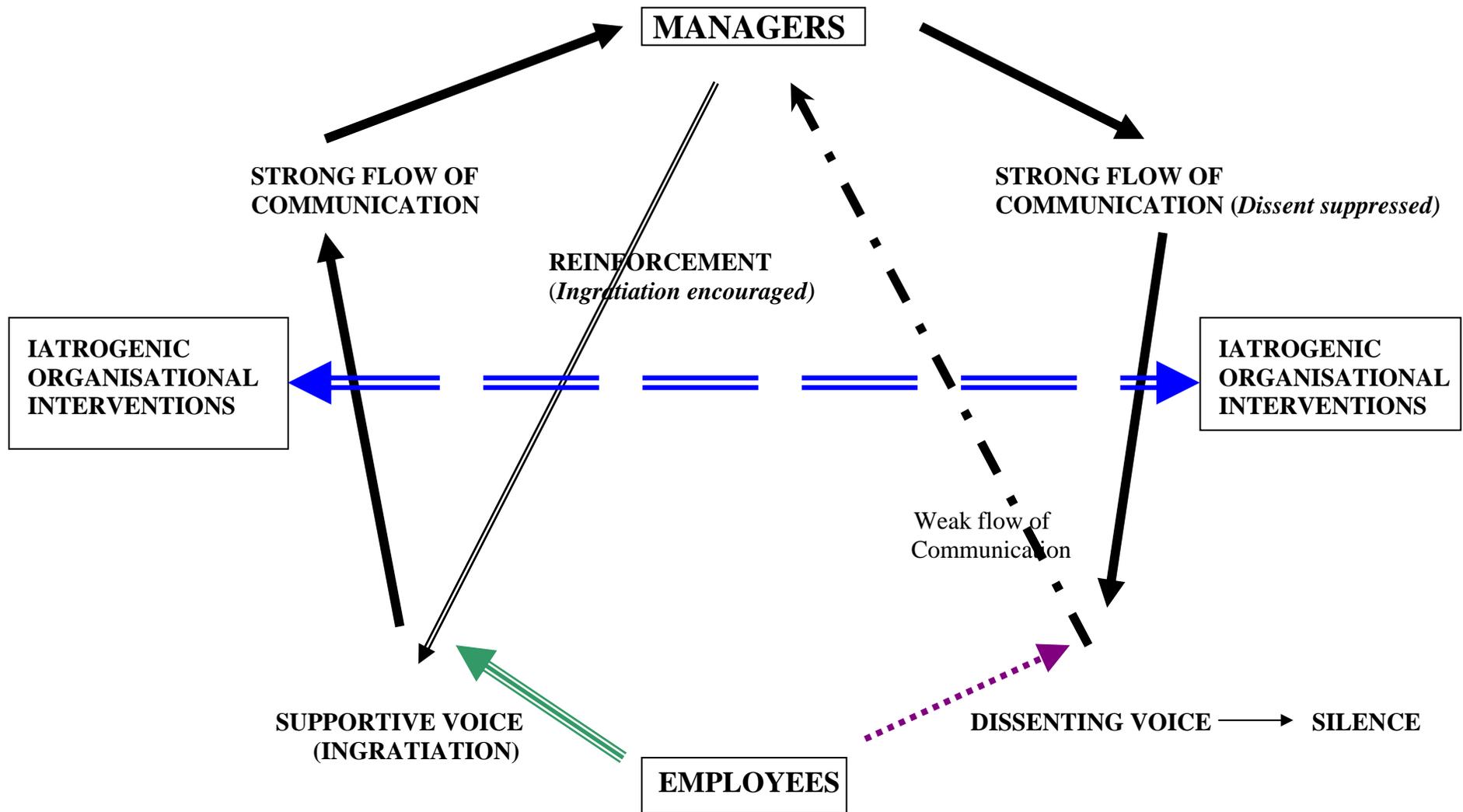
Adapted from: *Doing a Literature Review*, Chris Hart (1998:34/35)



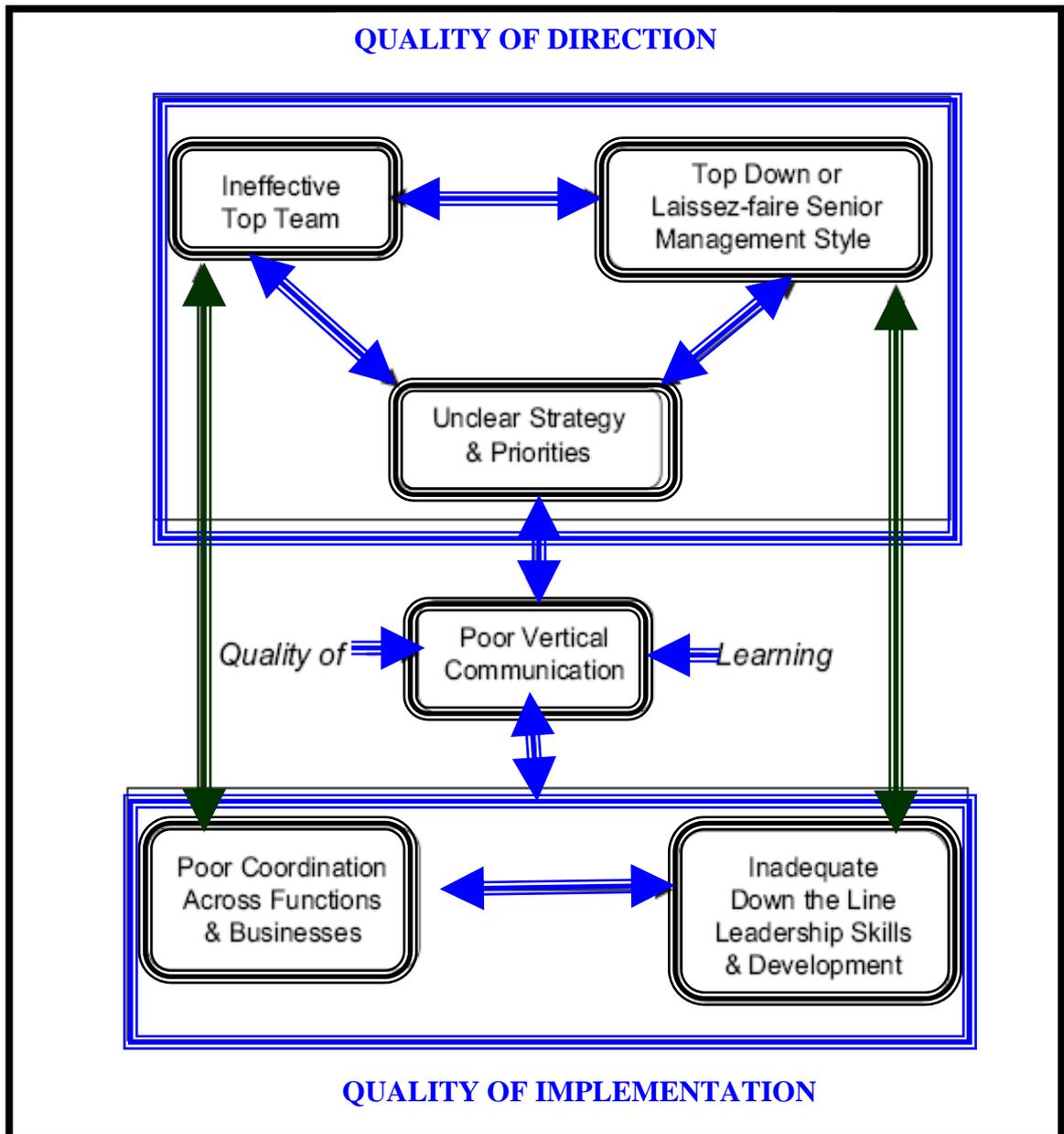
Appendix 5: The Benefits Of Upward Feedback (From Tourish and Hargie, 2004: 190)

THE BENEFITS OF UPWARD FEEDBACK

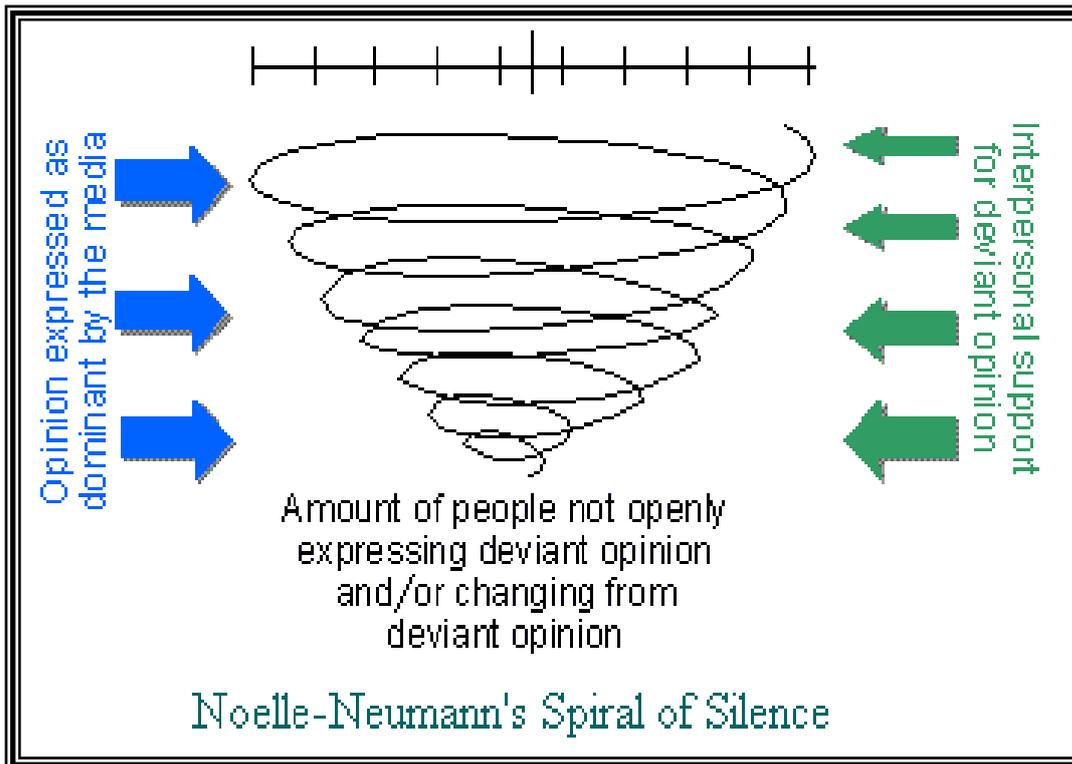
- The promotion of shared leadership, and an enhanced willingness by managers to act on employee suggestions (Moravec *et al.*, 1993).
- A greater tendency by employees to report positive changes in their managers' behaviour (Hegarty, 1974).
- Actual rather than perceived improvements in management behaviour following on feedback, beyond what could be attributed to regression to the mean (Reilly *et al.*, 1996).
- A reduced gap between managers' self-ratings and those of their subordinates (London and Wohlers, 1991).
- The creation of improved forums for obtaining information, garnering suggestions, defusing conflict and facilitating the expression of discontent (Shenhar, 1990).
- An enhancement of organizational learning (Weick and Ashford, 2001).
- Better decision-making - currently, it is estimated that about half of decision in organisations fail, largely because of insufficient participation and a failure to carry out an unrestricted search for solutions (Nutt, 1999).
- Enhanced participation (Stohl and Cheney, 2001)



Appendix 6: Supportive And Dissenting Voice In Upward Communication (Tourish and Robson, 2006)



Appendix 7: The Quality of Strategy Implementation (Beer et al., 2005)



Appendix 8 : Diagram of Noelle-Neumann's Spiral of Silence, 1991

Appendix 9: Time Magazine, , Dec. 30, 2002

From www.Time.com

From the Magazine | Persons Of The Year

Persons Of The Year



Posted Monday, Dec. 30, 2002

This was the year when the grief started to lift and the worries came in. During the first weeks of 2002, two dark moods entered the room, two anxieties that rattled down everybody's nerve paths, even on good days, and etched their particulars into the general disposition. To begin with, after Sept. 11, the passage of time drew off the worst of the pain, but every month or so there came a new disturbance--an orange alert, a dance-club bombing in Bali, a surface-to-air missile fired at a passenger jet--that showed us the beast still at our door. In the confrontation with Iraq, in the contested effort to build a homeland defense, we all struggled to regain something like the more secure world we thought we lived in before the towers fell. But every step of the way we wondered--was this the way back? What exactly did we need to be doing differently?

And all the while there was the black comedy of corporate fraud. Who knew that the swashbuckling economy of the '90s had produced so many buccaneers? You could laugh about the CEOs in handcuffs and the stock analysts who turned out to be fishier than storefront palm readers, but after a while the laughs came hard. Martha Stewart was dented and scuffed. Tyco was looted by its own executives. Enron and WorldCom turned out to be Twin Towers of false promises. They fell. Their stockholders and employees went down with them. So did a large measure of public faith in big corporations. Each new offence seemed to make the same point: with communism vanquished, capitalism was left with no real enemies but its own worst impulses. It can be undone by its own overreaching players. It can be bitten to pieces by its own alpha dogs.

Day after day, one set of misgivings twined around the other, keeping spooked investors away from the stock market, giving the whole year its undeniable saw-toothed edge. Were we headed for a world where all the towers would fall? All

the more reason to figure out quickly, before the next blow to the system, how to repair the fail-safe operations--in the boardrooms we trusted with our money, at the government agencies we trust with ourselves--that failed.

This is where three women of ordinary demeanor but exceptional guts and sense come into the picture. Sherron Watkins is the Enron vice president who wrote a letter to chairman Kenneth Lay in the summer of 2001 warning him that the company's methods of accounting were improper. In January, when a congressional subcommittee investigating Enron's collapse released that letter, Watkins became a reluctant public figure, and the Year of the Whistle-Blower began. Coleen Rowley is the FBI staff attorney who caused a sensation in May with a memo to FBI Director Robert Mueller about how the bureau brushed off pleas from her Minneapolis, Minn., field office that Zacarias Moussaoui, who is now indicted as a Sept. 11 co-conspirator, was a man who must be investigated. One month later Cynthia Cooper exploded the bubble that was WorldCom when she informed its board that the company had covered up \$3.8 billion in losses through the prestidigitations of phony bookkeeping.

These women were for the 12 months just ending what New York City fire fighters were in 2001: heroes at the scene, anointed by circumstance. They were people who did right just by doing their jobs rightly--which means ferociously, with eyes open and with the bravery the rest of us always hope we have and may never know if we do. Their lives may not have been at stake, but Watkins, Rowley and Cooper put pretty much everything else on the line. Their jobs, their health, their privacy, their sanity--they risked all of them to bring us badly needed word of trouble inside crucial institutions. Democratic capitalism requires that people trust in the integrity of public and private institutions alike. As whistle-blowers, these three became fail-safe systems that did not fail. For believing--really believing--that the truth is one thing that must not be moved off the books, and for stepping in to make sure that it wasn't, they have been chosen by TIME as its Persons of the Year for 2002.

Who are these women? For starters, they aren't people looking to hog the limelight. All initially tried to keep their criticisms in-house, to speak truth to power but not to Barbara Walters. They became public figures only because their memos were leaked. One reason you still don't know much about them is that none have given an on-the-record media interview until now.

In early December TIME brought all three together in a Minneapolis hotel room. Very quickly it became clear that none of them are rebels in the usual sense. The truest of true believers is more like it, ever faithful to the idea that where they worked was a place that served the wider world in some important way. But sometimes it's the keepers of the flame who feel most compelled to set their imperfect temple to the torch. When headquarters didn't live up to its mission, they took it to heart. At Enron the company handed out note pads with inspiring quotes. One was from Martin Luther King Jr.: "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter." Watkins saw that quote every day. Didn't anybody else?

What more do they have in common? All three grew up in small towns in the middle of the country, in families that at times lived paycheck to paycheck. In a twist that will delight psychologists, they are all firstborns. More unusually, all three are married but serve as the chief breadwinners in their families. Cooper and Rowley have husbands who are full-time, stay-at-home dads. For every one of them, the decision to confront the higher-ups meant jeopardizing a paycheck their families truly depended on.

The joint interview in Minneapolis was the first time the three had met. But in no time they recognized how much they knew one another's experience. During the ordeals of this year, it energized them to know that there were two other women out there fighting the same kind of battles. In preparation for their meeting in Minneapolis, WorldCom's Cooper read through the testimony that Enron's Watkins gave before Congress. "I actually broke out in a cold sweat," Cooper says. In Minneapolis, when FBI lawyer Rowley heard Cooper talk about a need for regular people to step up and do the right thing, she stood up and applauded

And what to make of the fact that all are women? There has been talk that their gender is not a coincidence; that women, as outsiders, have less at stake in their organizations and so might be more willing to expose weaknesses. They don't think so. As it happens, studies show that women are a bit less likely than men to be whistle-blowers. And a point worth mentioning--two out of the three hate the term whistle-blower. Too much like "tattletale," says Cooper. But if the term unnerves Cooper and Rowley, that may be because whistle-blowers don't have an easy time. Almost all say they would not do it again. If they aren't fired, they're cornered: isolated and made irrelevant. Eventually many suffer from alcoholism or depression.

With these three, that hasn't happened, though Watkins left her job at Enron after a year when she wasn't given much to do. But ask them if they have been thanked sincerely by anyone at the top of their organization, and they burst out laughing. Some of their colleagues hate them, especially the ones who believe that their outfits would have quietly righted all wrongs if only they had been given time. "There is a price to be paid," says Cooper. "There have been times that I could not stop crying."

Watkins, Rowley and Cooper have kick-started conversations essential to the clean operation of American life, conversations that will continue for years. It may still be true that no one could have prevented the attacks of Sept. 11, but the past year has shown that the FBI and the CIA overlooked vital clues and held back data from each other. No matter how many new missile systems the Pentagon deploys or which new airport screening systems are adopted, if we can't trust the institutions charged with tracking terrorists to do the job, homeland defense will be an empty phrase. The Coleen Rowleys of the federal workforce will be the ones who will let us know what's going on.

As for corporate America, accounting scams of the kind practiced at Enron and WorldCom will continually need to be exposed and corrected before yet another phalanx of high-level operators gets the wrong idea and a thousand Enrons bloom. And the people best positioned to call them on it will be sitting in offices like the

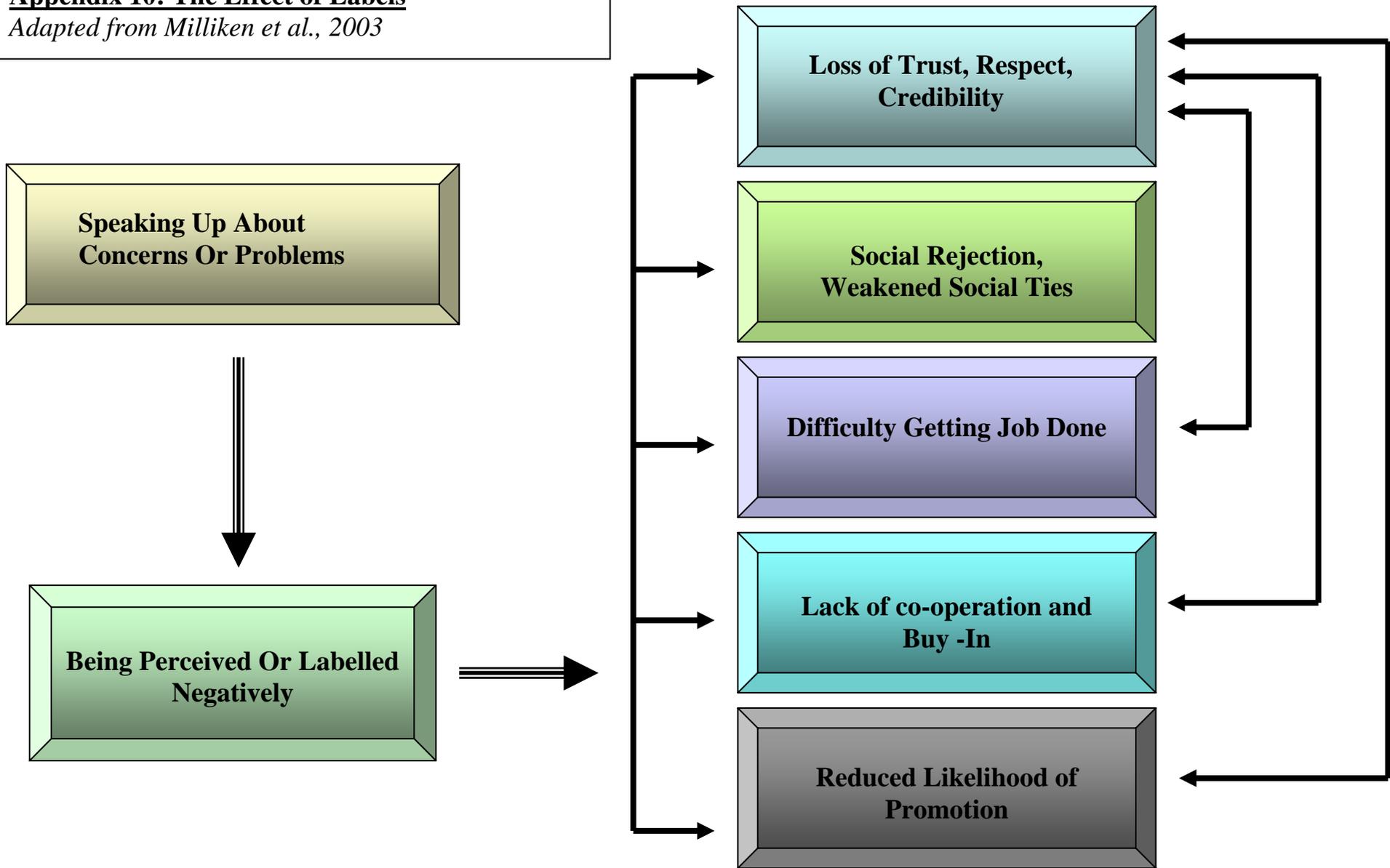
ones that Watkins and Cooper occupied. The new Sarbanes-Oxley Act, which requires CEOs and CFOs to vouch for the accuracy of their companies' books, is just one sign of what Cooper calls "a corporate-governance revolution across the country."

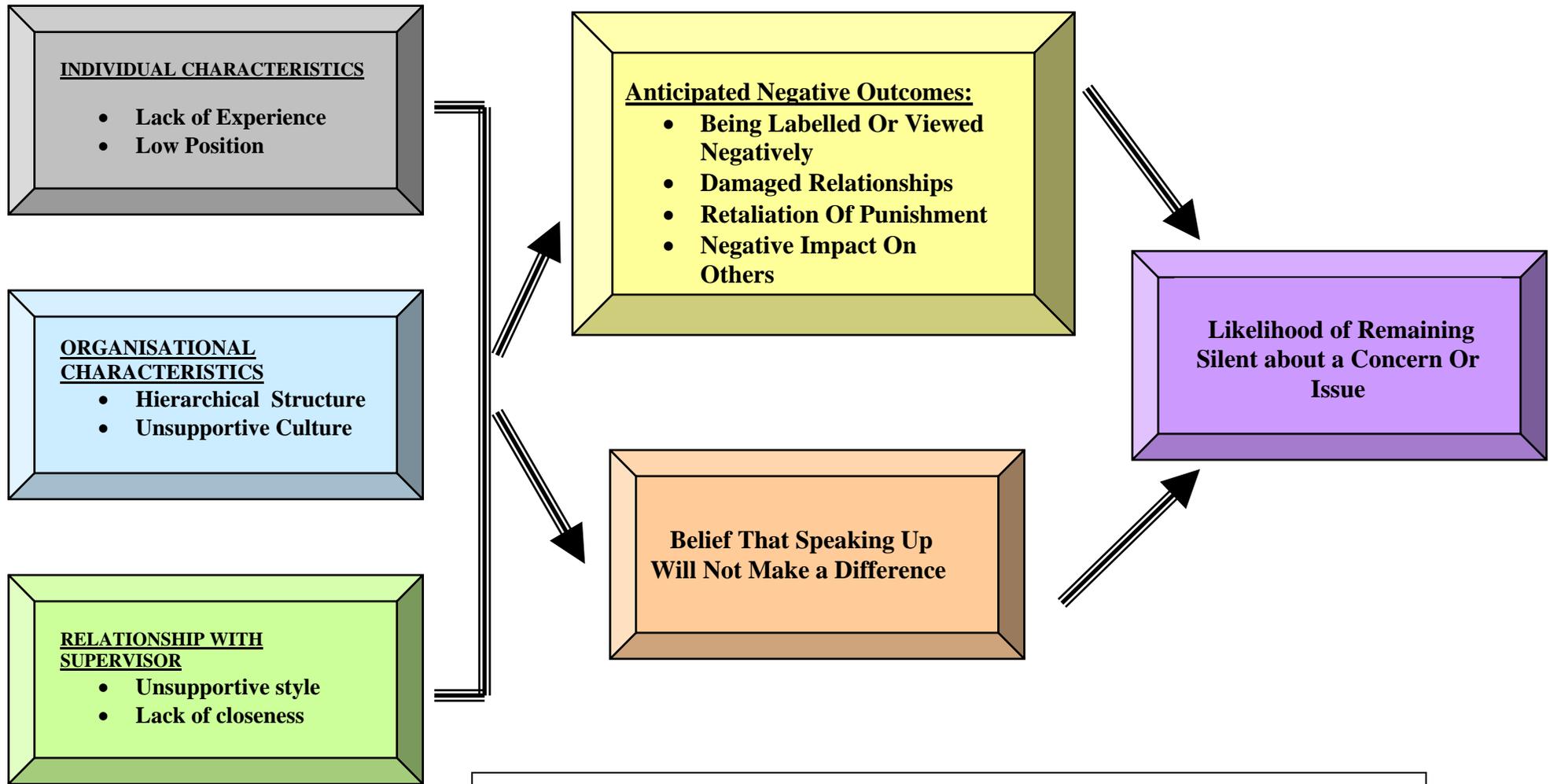
These were ordinary people who did not wait for higher authorities to do what needed to be done. Literature's great statement on unwelcome truth telling is Ibsen's play *An Enemy of the People*. Something said by one of his characters reminds us of what we admire about our Dynamic Trio. "A community is like a ship," he observes. "Everyone ought to be prepared to take the helm." When the time came, these women saw the ship in citizenship. And they stepped up to that wheel.



Appendix 10: The Effect of Labels

Adapted from Milliken et al., 2003



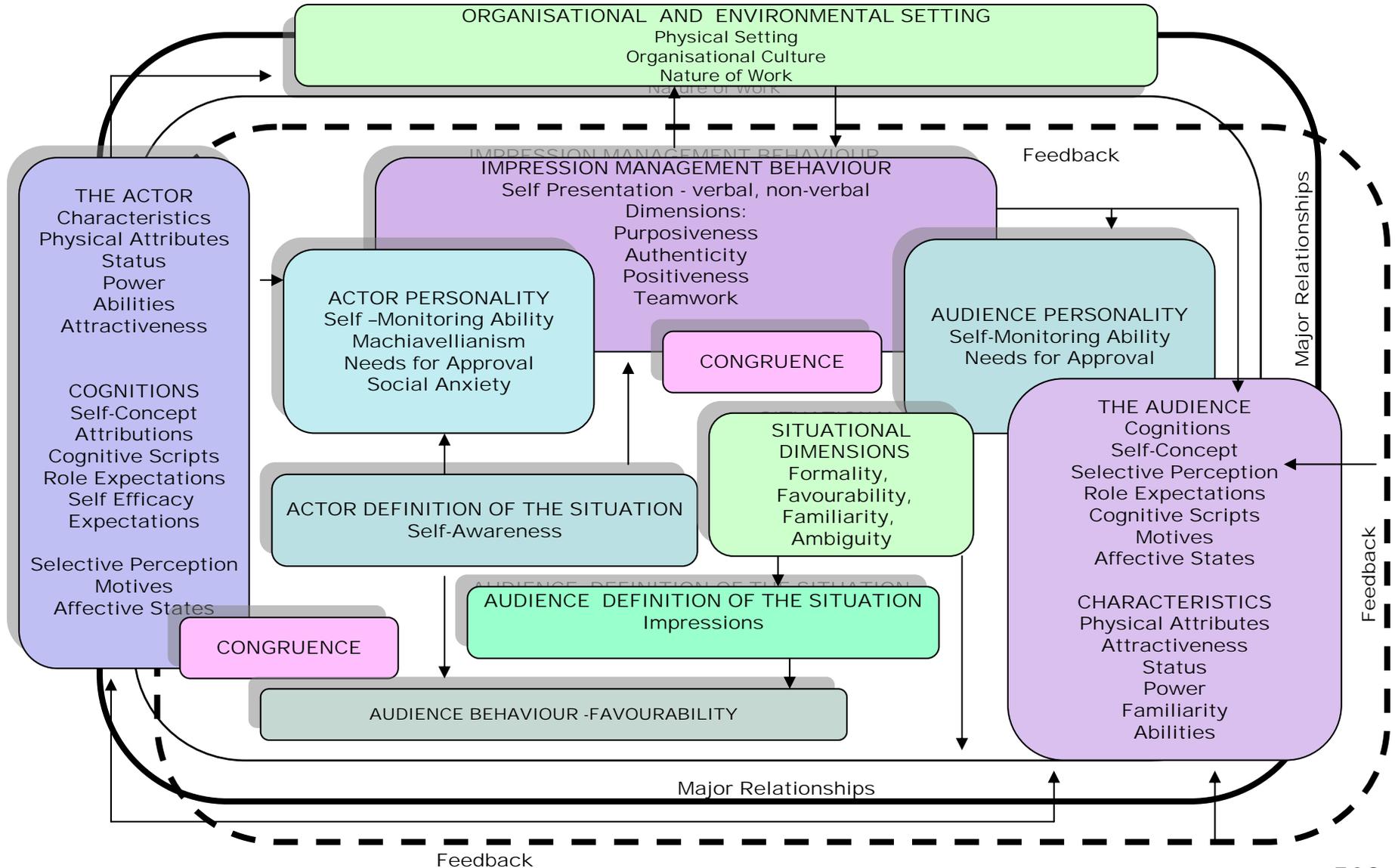


Appendix 11: Milliken 's (2003) Social and Relational Model of Employee Silence

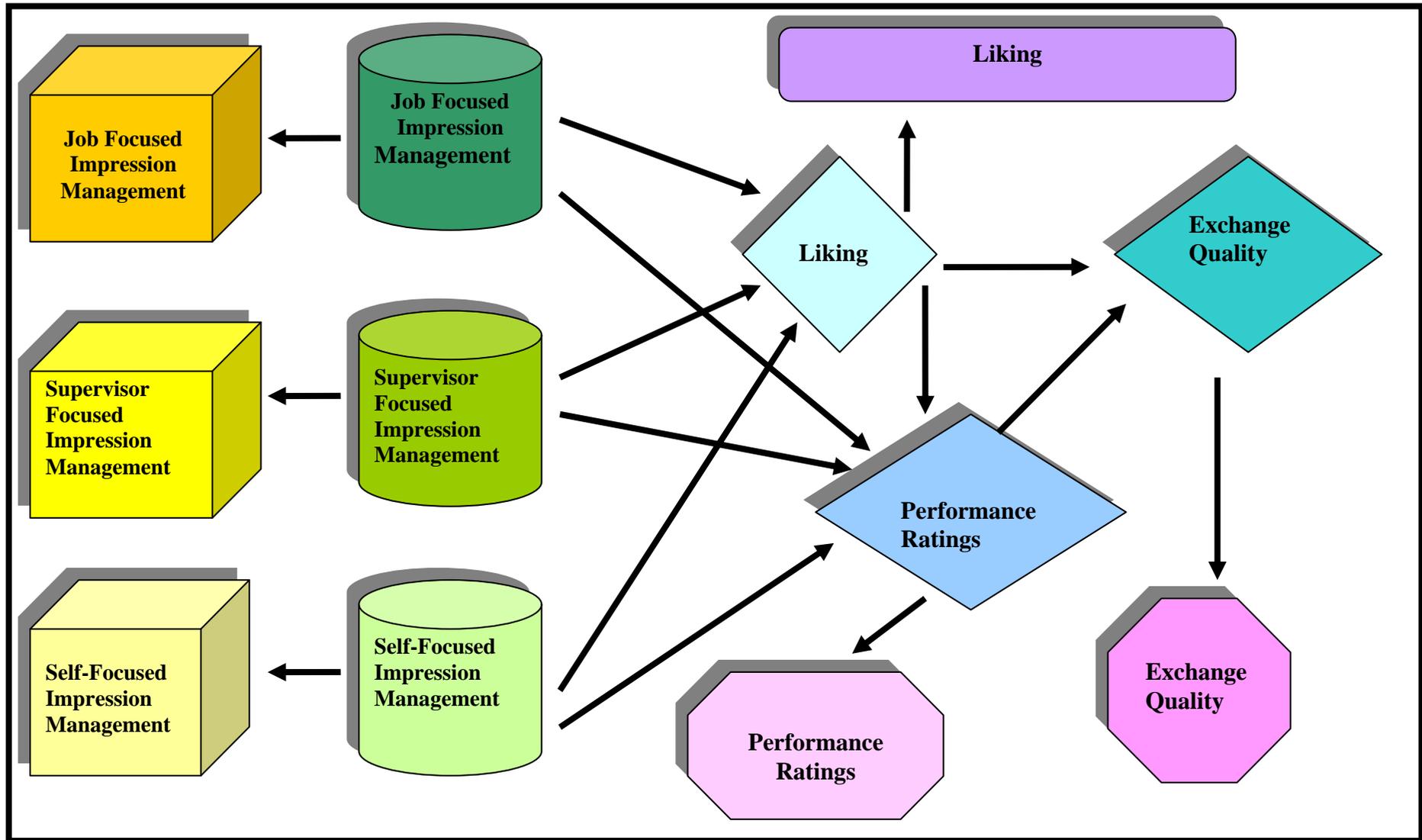
Appendix 12 : Reasons Why Employees Remain Silent (Milliken et al., 2003)

<u>REASON</u>	<u>%</u>
1. <i>Fear of being labelled negatively. 'Being a rebel is not embraced'</i>	30
2. <i>Fear of damaging a peer relationship, loss of trust and respect</i>	27.5
3. <i>Feelings of futility, recipient will not be responsive</i>	25
4. <i>Fear of retaliation or punishment, losing job</i>	20
5. <i>Concerns about negative impact on others, not wanting to upset anyone, becoming an 'outcast'</i>	20
5. <i>Lack of tenure, lack of experience</i>	32.5
6. <i>Organisational characteristics; hierarchical structure; unsupportive culture</i>	30
7. <i>Poor relationship with supervisor, the relationship is distant</i>	20

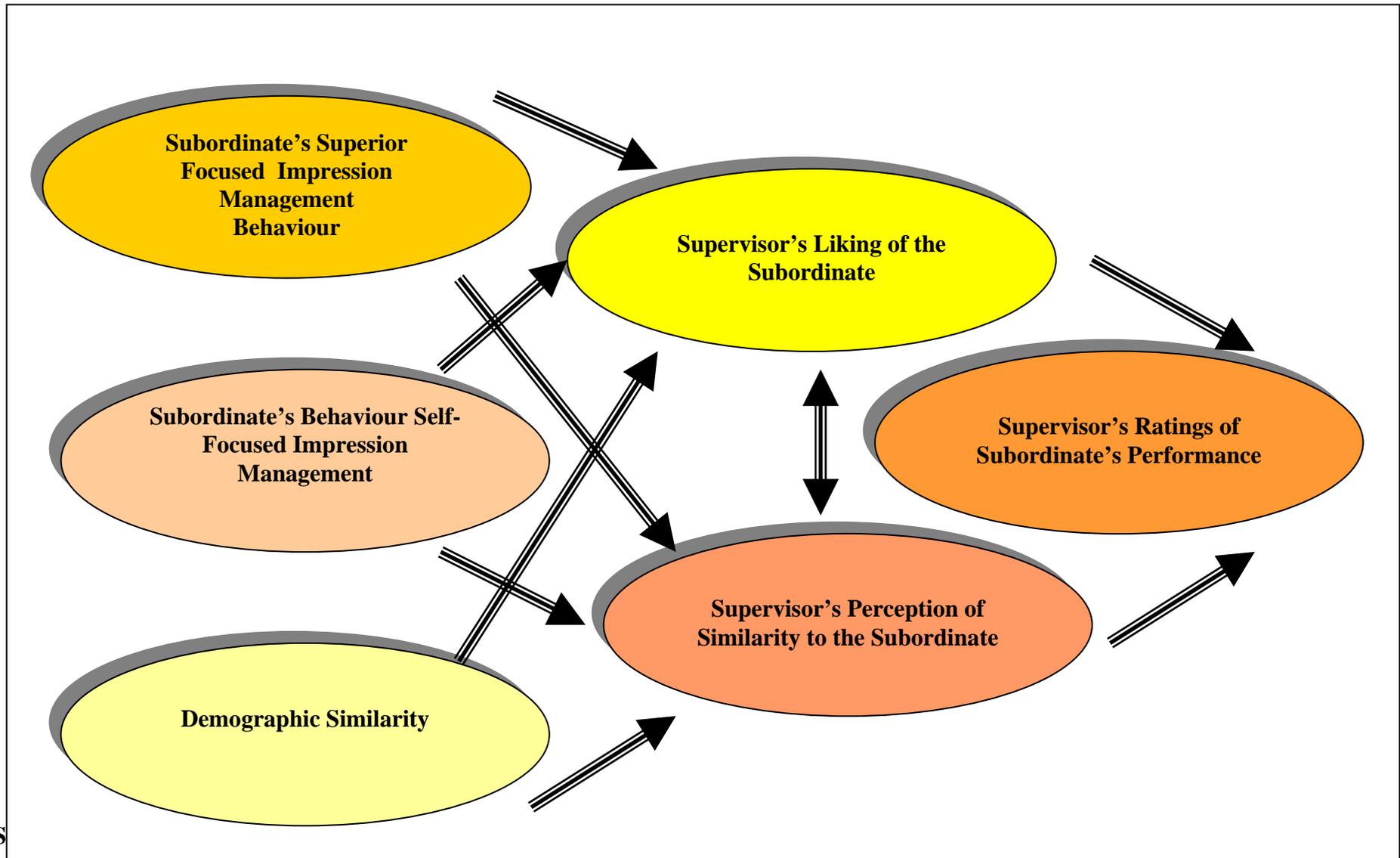
Appendix 13: Key Variables and Relationships in Impression management (Gardner And Martinko, 1988: 323)



Appendix 14: Self, Job And Supervisor Focused Impression Management Tactics.
Adapted from Wayne and Ferris (1990, 1999)



Appendix 15. The Impression Management Model
Adapted From Wayne And Liden (1995)



Appendix 16: Verbal Self Presentational Behaviours Used In Upward Communication

(Adapted from Schlenker (1980) and Gardner and Martinko (1988))

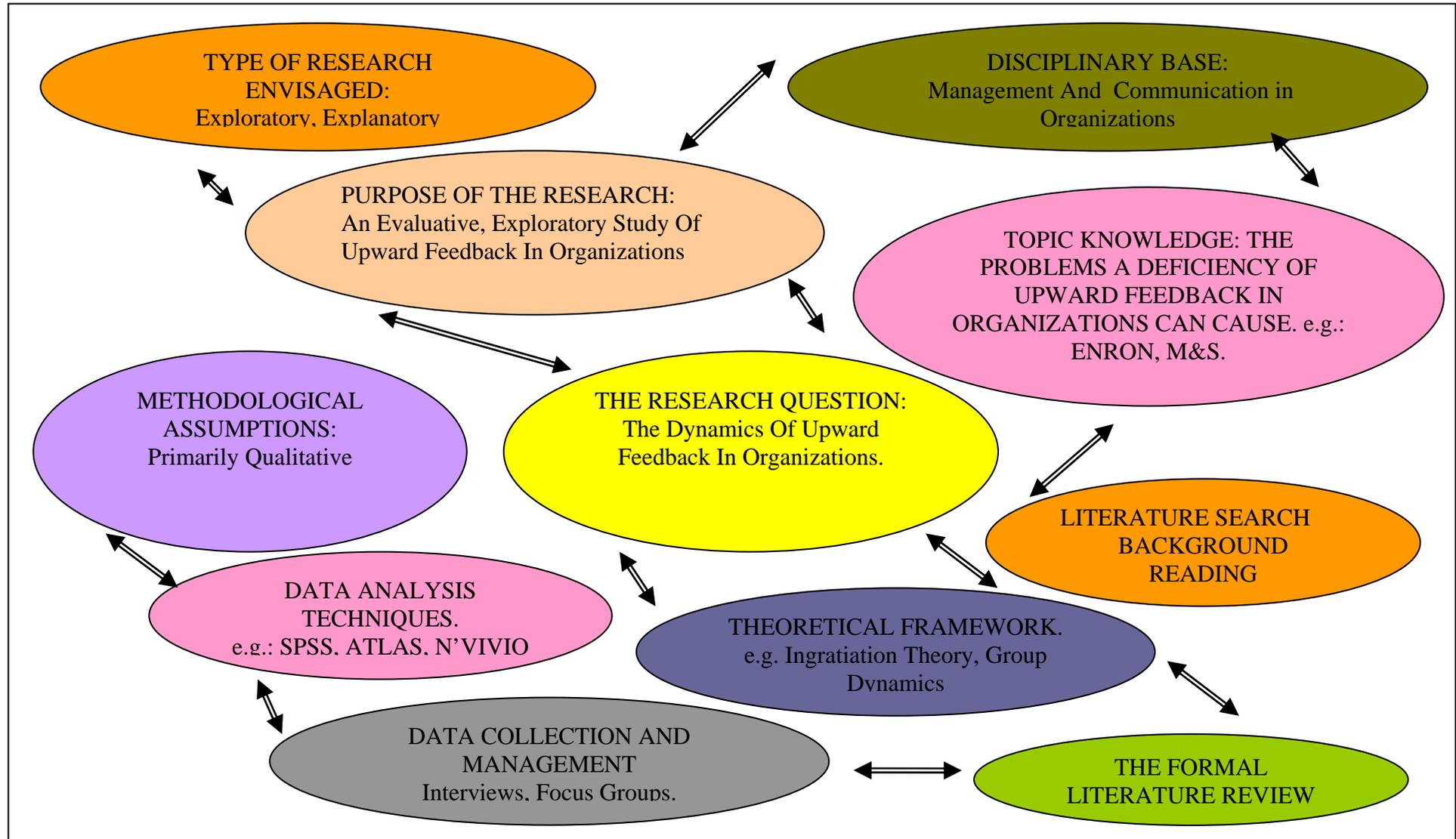
<u>BEHAVIOUR</u>	<u>DEFINITION</u>	<u>EXAMPLES</u>
1. Self-Descriptions	Descriptive statements made by the subordinate to describe himself/herself.	<i>'I'm a real go-getter, I always get results.'</i>
2. Organisation Descriptions	Descriptive statements made by an actor to describe the organisation he belongs to.	<i>'Our firm has entered the market for ***** and we have been extraordinarily successful; we have far surpassed our expectation.'</i>
3. Opinion Conformity	Expressions of agreement and conformity by the subordinate to gain the superior's approval.	<i>'You're absolutely right. I couldn't agree with you more.'</i>
4. Accounts	A subordinate explaining an event or situation to his boss, minimising the severity or negativity of the event. Accounts may include excuses, defences, ploys at being innocent or justifications.	<i>'I don't know what happened to the *****. I did all I could but it is not working. Maybe it could be defective?'</i>
5. Apologies	Admissions of blameworthiness for an undesirable event, coupled with an attempt by the actor to obtain a pardon from the superior.	<i>'I'm sorry I'm late. I've had a bad day. Please forgive me'</i>
6. Acclaiming	The subordinate publicly commending the superiors/unit's achievements and successes, maximising their implications.	<i>'The sales in our division have almost doubled since I was last hired.'</i>
7. Other-enhancement	Efforts by the subordinate to increase his or her attractiveness to an audience through the use of favourable evaluations of the supervisor's attributes.	<i>'I really admire your style of management. You are amazing. You are decisive and fair and yet so modest. It is a pleasure to work for you.'</i>
8. Rendering Favours	Doing something nice for the supervisor to gain his favour and approval.	<i>'Please accept this wee gift as a wee token of my esteem and respect for you.'</i>
9. Remaining silent	Not saying anything, instead of saying something critical	<i>'Ummmmmmmmmmmm....'</i>

Appendix 17: Table On Original And Current Research Aim And Objectives

<p><u>Original Research Aim and Objectives and Methodology.</u> <u>OCTOBER 2003</u></p>	<p><u>Current and Authentic Research Aim and Objectives and Methodology .</u> <u>2005-2006</u></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>(AIM) to explore the extent of upward communication in organisations</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>(AIM) to explore the dynamics of upward communication in organisations</u>
<p><u>(OBJECTIVES)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to gain a further understanding of feedback processes in organisations, particularly from those without managerial authority to those who possess it. 	<p><u>(OBJECTIVES)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to identify the main barriers and concerns that impede the flow of critical feedback
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to investigate what organisations gain if they institutionalise systems for critical upward feedback into their decision making process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to investigate what organisations might gain if they institutionalise systems for critical upward feedback into their organisational processes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to develop a mixed methodology and an instrument which will enable the measurement of the contribution that may be made by systematic upward critical feedback for institutional success. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to identify the attitudes , changes and forces that stimulate employees to limit the amount of critical feedback they are willing to offer and to explore the impediments managers often put in the way of critical upward feedback, intentionally or otherwise.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to study the lessons that can be drawn from the research 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to research how the schema of impression management and ingratiation theory might be implicated in the transmission and receipt of feedback
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to use a predominantly qualitative methodology with a soupcon of statistics.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'ATLAS' qualitative software package will be used. The quantitative survey instruments could be analysed using SPSS. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • N6 qualitative analysis software ??? • FRAMEWORK ANALYSIS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •

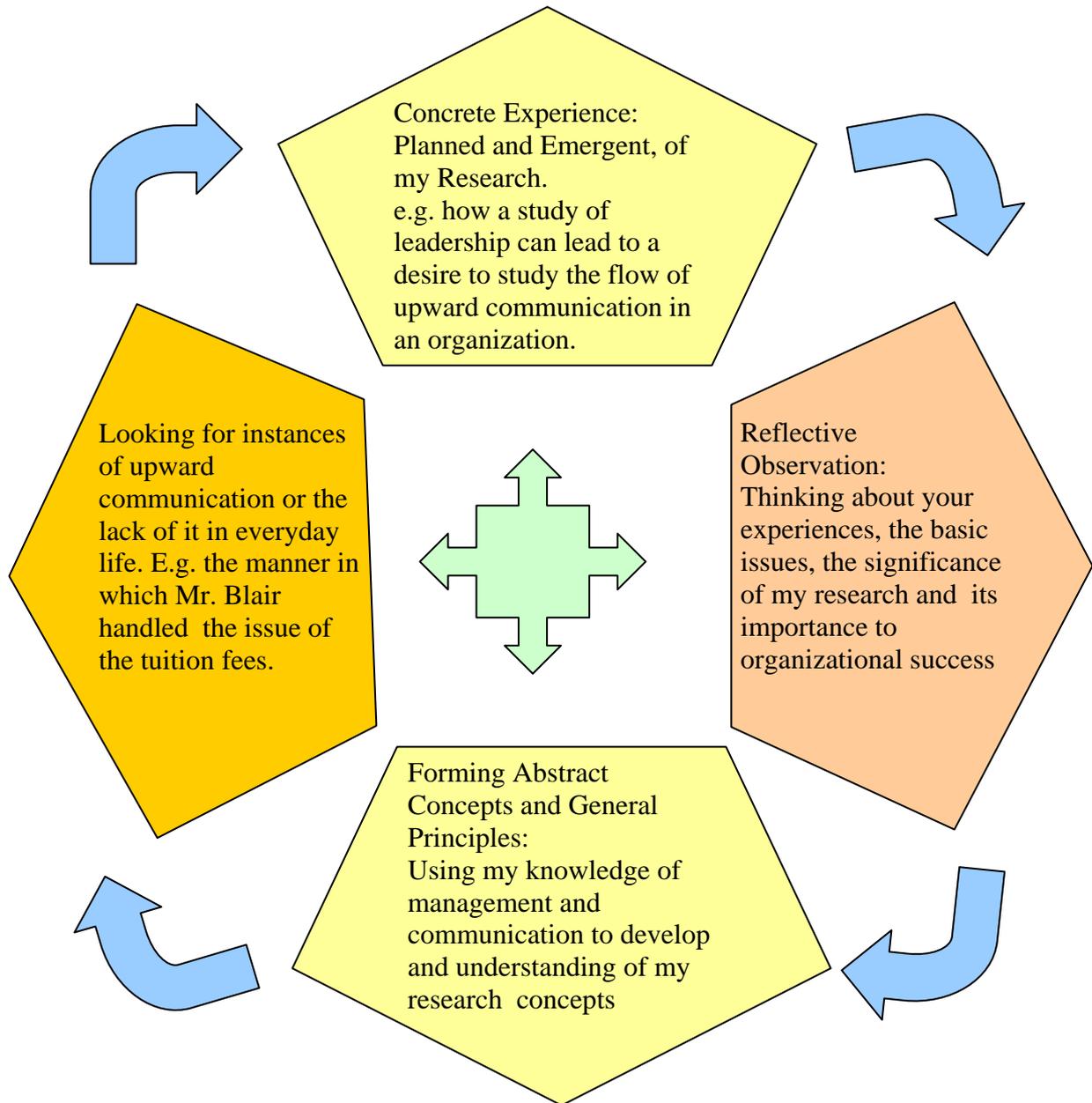
Appendix 18: The Context of this Research

Adapted from *Doing a Literature Review*, Chris Hart(1998: 157)

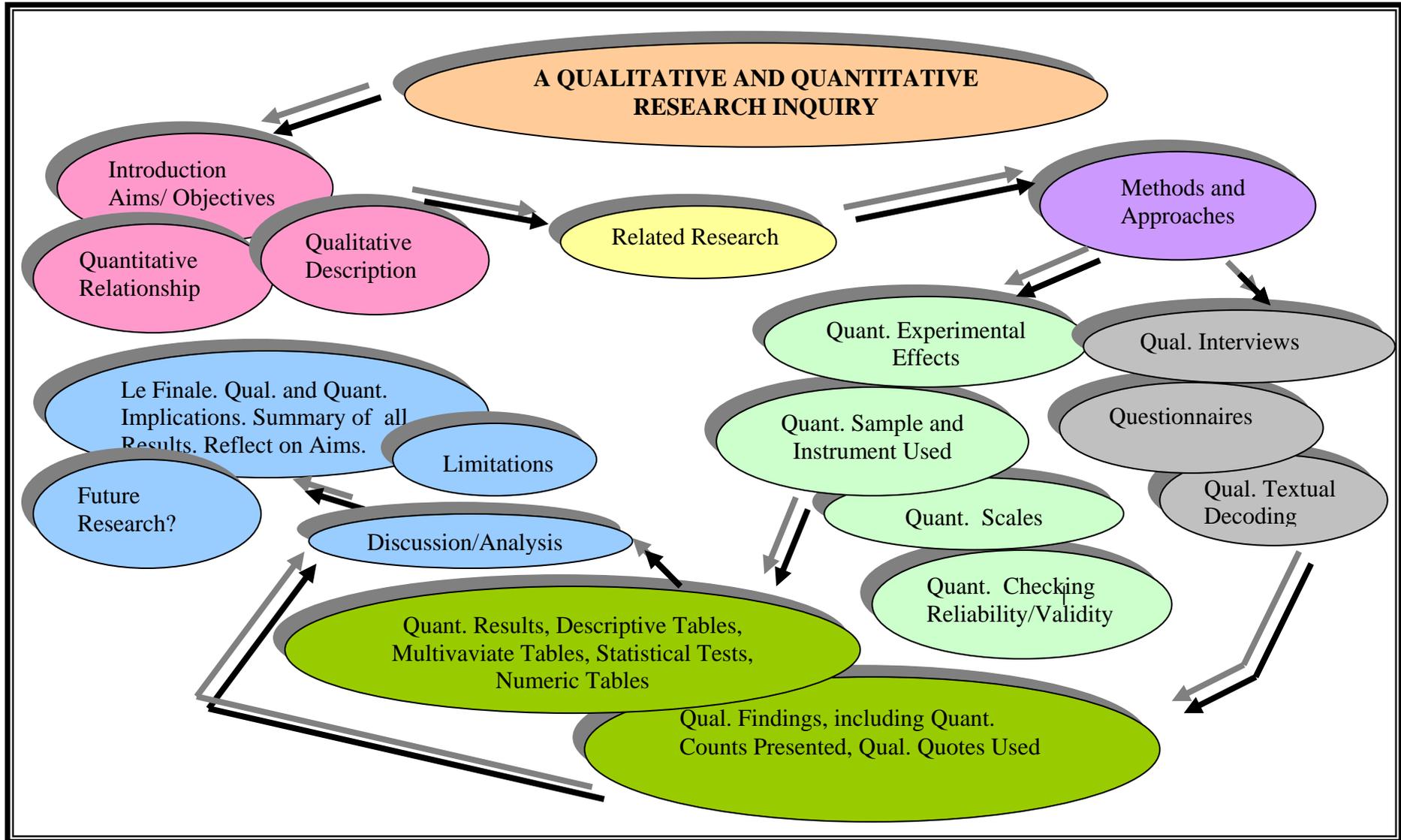


Appendix 19: The Learning Experience

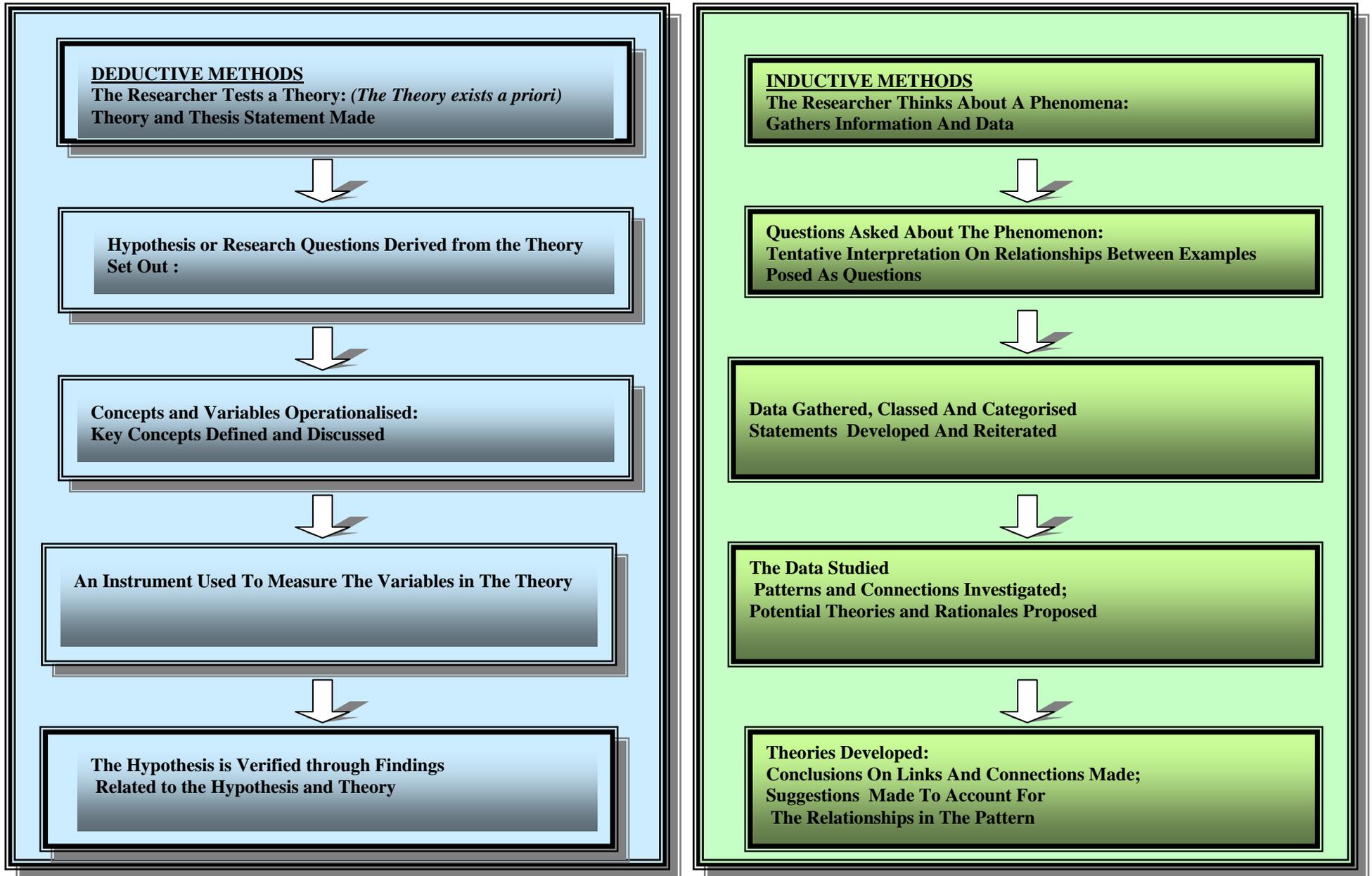
Adapted from: *Organizational Psychology*. Kolb.J., Rubin. M, MacIntyre J.,(1984)



Appendix 20: A Map Of the Original Qualitative and Quantitative Methodology
 Adapted from Cresswell (1994)



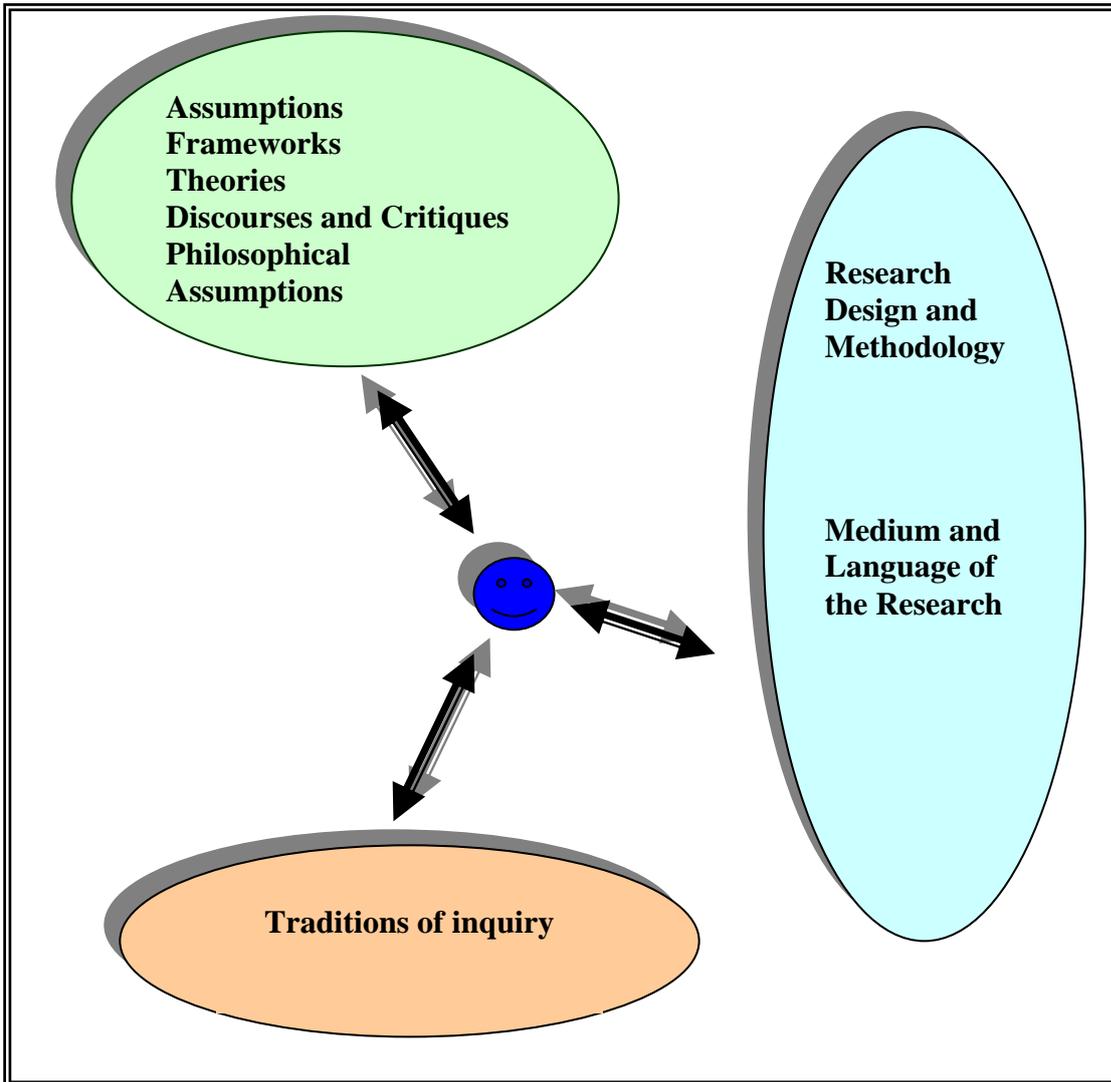
Appendix 21: Deductive and Inductive Modes of Inquiry



Appendix 22: Choosing A Qualitative or Quantitative Methodology

<u>QUANTITATIVE</u>	<u>QUALITATIVE</u>
Reality is objective , singular apart from the researcher	Reality is subjective and multiple, as seen by participants in a study.
Value free and unbiased.	Value laden and probably biased.
Formal, based on set definitions, impersonal voice, use of accepted quantitative words	Informal, evolving decisions, personal voice, accepted qualitative words.
Deductive process Cause and Effect Static design, context free Generalizations lead to prediction, explanation and understanding. Accurate and reliable through validity and reliability.	Inductive process. Mutually simultaneous shaping of factors. Emerging design-categories identified during research process. Context bound Articulate and reliable through verification. Patterns and Theories developed for an understanding.

Appendix 23: The Highlights of Conducting Qualitative Research.
Adapted from Cresswell, 1998



Appendix 24: Inductive Analysis In My Research.

Adapted from Research Design, Cresswell (1994: 141)

**RESEARCHER DEVELOPS A SOUND AND INTERESTING
RESEARCH PERSPECTIVE**

(e.g. Researching the how/where/what of the dynamics of upward communication in organizations midst of real organisational ambience and change)



RESEARCHER LOOKS FOR EMERGING LINKS

(e.g. The link between organizational failure and the lack of open upward feedback, such as Enron, M&S; the connection between the boss setting the tone of upward communication and the actual upward communication , the link between muted or artificial upward communication and downsizing in Organisation B)



RESEARCHER ASKS QUESTIONS

(What are the Barriers and Filters to Upward Feedback and what can be done about this? What tactics are used and why and how?)



RESEARCHER GATHERS INFORMATION

(The Vital Contribution of Upward Feedback towards the Success of the Organization; Impression management and Ingratiation Tactics used to convey critical upward communication)

Appendix 25: The Framework Analysis (Swallow et al., 2002)

Framework is a matrix based method which uses a thematic framework to classify and organise data according to key themes, concepts and emergent categories. Individual studies each have their own thematic framework, comprising a series of main themes, sub-divided by a succession of related subtopics. Each main theme is displayed or 'charted' in its own matrix such that every 'case' or unit of data collection is allocated a row and each column denotes a separate subtopic. Data from each interview is then synthesised within the appropriate parts of the thematic framework until all the raw material. The key steps are:

- *Identifying initial themes or concepts*
- *Labelling or tagging the data (Indexing or Coding the Data)*
- *Creating thematic charts to sorting and order the data*

Once the main themes to be used are decided, each is allocated a column on the chart. Each participant or unit of data collection is then assigned a particular row on the chart and will stay in this same location on every chart. In Framework, this process of synthesizing the data is referred to as 'charting' whereby the key elements of passages of data are placed in the thematic matrix on a spreadsheet. Thereafter, various analytic processes that follow as the researcher moves backwards and forwards through the various stages of conceptual redefinition, refinement, classification and interpretation that qualitative data analysis requires. Framework therefore helps the analyst in the central function of qualitative data analysis – the quest for understanding the phenomena under investigation and the meanings assigned to them.

Appendix 26: Deliberations on Qualitative Analysis Software

The choice of software qualitative data analysis before the researcher, after attending seminars on qualitative software was from:

- ATLAS.ti
- NVivo
- Nud*ist (N6)
- MAX qda

All the free trials and literature of the qualitative software for qualitative research reiterate the ideals of validity and reliability. All these packages manage data records, access them accurately according to date, handle coding or attributes, scope searches and iteratively change scope, class any scope by coding or attributes and display and explore patterns across data. They also manage ideas and the hierarchical catalogues that clarify concepts and their relationships and check development of ideas and adequacy of node system to code content of each new record.

Initially, an arbitrary decision was made to use ATLAS software. However, as the study evolved, in the interests of maximizing time efficiency and maintaining the steady pulse of my progress, MAX qda was selected. However, the researcher was also aware that N6 was an exceptionally sensitive and insightful piece of software. It thus becomes possible to analyse interviews using nodes. N6 can also export these searches to a table and provide a rapid response to questions and emerging theories. One of the distinguishing features of N6 is the ability to use documents

in plain text. Nudist 6 is reputedly, by far the most straightforward to get to know of any of the qda packages.

NVivo undoubtedly has a fine-grained, in-depth and organic approach to analysis. Nevertheless, the researcher believes that the advanced features of NVivo will not be of significant use to her for her data analysis. For instance, NVivo also has an in-built multi-layered graphics modeller that can link to 'live' data, which will not be of any use to my research. Therefore using NVivo does not warrant the time that needs to be set aside and invested into mastering its extremely complicated and often daunting facets.

NVivo's editing is totally direct, using an internal word-processor. This encourages transcribing within NVivo; however, with the digital software with the digital tape recorder I used made transcribing a relatively straightforward procedure.

Most software qda packages accept plain text documents, of any number and length. All of them support the viewing of a document in a Document Browser where the researcher can code the text of multiple documents without invalidating any existing coding it has. MAX qda, however, only uses RTF. files but N6 and NVivo support rich text documents as well as doc. files.

Finally, N6 was chosen to be used for this research, because it was decided to be the most suitable qda package. However, N6 was abandoned later for the traditional manner of interpretive analysis.

Appendix: 27

A Synopsis of the Pilot Interviews

Participant A

The interview with Participant A, the Dean of the Faculty, was remarkable and relevant. This was my third interview. Participant A is a dynamic, knowledgeable individual. He was able to grasp the crux of my research instantly and exclaimed that it was a fascinating subject. He reflected on the importance balance of cultivating an organisational culture of open communication but not a culture of whinging or complaining.

Furthermore, he cast an interesting light on the comparison of the principal agency analysis with the dynamics of upward communication, 'delegation is not an abdication of responsibility. Because I have certain responsibilities... but, if I were to ask you to undertake a particular job for me, my job is to ensure that you are comfortable in taking on the new task and that you feel you have the skills to undertake the task ...If anything goes wrong, I take the responsibility because I have delegated the task but it's still actually my responsibility so, should anything go wrong, I'm the one who takes the flak.' The principal-agent theory is often used in the study of organisational phenomena and the problems of corporate accountability (Fama, 1980; Mirlees; 1976; Ross, 1973; Shavell, 1979; Fama and Jensen, 1998). It can be applied to employer-employee, lawyer-client, buyer-supplier, and other agency relationships and may be compared to many of the aspects of upward feedback in organisations.

Participant A also spoke knowledgeably about the importance of democratic leadership and sees himself as an open caring superior. He believes that opinion conformity is the most commonly used form of impression management.

However, one of the points that Participant A mentioned which is as yet unexplored in my literature review, is the relevance of the use of body language and positioning in upward communication, 'Opinion conformity would be a tactic that is used quite a lot - but the other thing is body language in meetings where a senior member of staff at peer level is talking and you generally are in agreement with them or even if you are not in agreement with them.... then a tactic can be while they're talking for you to be nodding and smiling. Then when they finish speaking you would come in and add to their contribution and move it round a little bit further. I've used that myself as a process to influence a decision.'

On positioning, Participant A offered an interesting observation, 'If it's the same level all around the table, you will see displays of quite deliberate dissent. Before a meeting starts, where people sit is interesting... Whereas if I sit here, (opposite) it's confrontational. If I sit here, (at the head of the table) that's me being the boss and I could move my chair in terms of the height so my chair is higher than yours and you have no option but to sit at a lower level. Those sorts of behaviours in terms of communication are really important. So in order that you can feel relaxed, I sit here (next to me).'

Participant B

The second interview was with Participant B, a Head of School, a confident, lively person with a sense of humour. He was very charming and quite intrigued by the subject of my research. He sometimes rambled off the point, but his observations were absorbing. Although he is very aware of his position of importance in the organisation, he spoke in a meaningful way about the importance of trust and mutual respect in the dynamics of upward communication between a subordinate and a superior, 'there has to be more communication and there has to be a sense of trust ...and mutual respect in the relationship'. This remark links directly to the significance of trust in the research literature on Machiavellianism in Ingratiation Theory (Jones, 1964). Pandey and Rastogi (1979:224) have, through their experiments, given support to the observation that individuals judged high in Machiavellianism used ingratiation tactics much more than often than those individuals judged as being low in Machiavellianism. The Mach Scale of Christie and Geis (1970) focuses on several factors, the most important of which are:

- the use of manipulative personal interaction and
- an unfavourable view of human nature. 'Anyone who trusts anyone is asking for trouble' (Pandey and Rastogi, 1979:224). This sets the stage in a counterfeit manner for the use of impression management tactics in the transmission of upward communication.

Participant C

Participant C, a Lecturer at a School, was a sensitive, personable and articulate person. However, possibly because of the fact that the office where he was interviewed was a common office and perhaps also because of the sensitivity of the questions on impression management tactics, he was rather reticent and often rather reluctant to express himself. This was the first interview of the pilot study.

On the subject of different impression management styles, he spoke of his own style of ‘quiet agreement’ when dissenting with a management level decision...’if I don’t like something I generally either stay quiet or make a reasonable comment about it but not...agree’. He also had a relevant perspective on employee ‘silence’ (Milliken and Morrison, 2003), ‘I don’t think this university is different from any other organisation – people don’t want to talk out of turn. It’s human nature. I do know of situations where people won’t speak out because if they did so they might as well shift careers.’

Thematic Links

Many stimulating links were revealed between the themes of my literature review and the responses of the interviewees of my pilot study. For instance, Participants B and C believe that it is the head of the organisation who sets the tone for upward communication. It is not merely the belief that the boss may either encourage or quench the spirit of upward communication, but that employees take their cue from

their supervisors when communicating with them. This observation is in direct parallel with an important aspect of modern communication research that investigates how bosses set the style of upward communication in an organisation. Edge and Williams (1994) have analysed how subordinates perceive their supervisor's affirming communicator style (i.e. friendly, affirmative, relaxed) and how this impacts directly on the upward communication style and upward influence tactic they select.

Appendix 28: A Brief Overview of the Research

This study explores the extent of upward communication, what organisations gain if they institutionalise systems for critical upward feedback into their decision making process, the main barriers that often impede efforts to implement such ideas and how ingratiation theory might be implicated in the transmission and receipt of feedback.

Feedback can be defined as, ‘messages conveyed to a receiver about his, her, or its (group) performance’ (Cusella, 1987: 626). It is an intrinsic aspect of communication processes, and hence is thoroughly integrated into the fabric of organizational life. Research suggests that facilitating employee voice can lead to organizational success and prosperity by alleviating employees’ tendencies to hide mistakes and encouraging open communication which encourages innovation and the creation of the ‘humanistic organisation’ (Larkin, 1986: 36). Impaired upward communication may result in large amounts of information about potential problems being lost and thus ‘create serious distortions in the knowledge on which managers base their decisions... Thus, silence about important issues can compromise an organization’s ability to detect errors and engage in learning.... These outcomes can have serious long-term consequences for the employees and their relationships with the organization’ (Milliken, 2003: 1473).

In addition, this study investigates the dynamics of upward communication within the rubric of Ingratiation Theory (Jones, 1964). The term ‘ingratiation’, according to Jones (1964:11) refers to ‘a class of strategic behaviours illicitly designed to influence a particular other person concerning the attractiveness of one’s personal qualities’. The Concise Oxford English Dictionary (1992, 608) describes ‘ingratiation’ thus: ‘to

bring oneself into favour; in gratiam into favour'. There is no negative connotation associated with the word, 'ingratiation'; indeed it is normal part of all human interaction. Existing research has failed to fully capture the complexity of impression management behaviours within an organisation. This thesis attempts to investigate the possible impact of ingratiation theory on one of the vital processes of actual organisational life, upward communication. Individuals often engage in impression management designed to influence the way in which they are perceived by others (Wayne and Liden, 1995; Appelbaum and Hughes, 1998; Bolino and Turnley, 2003). Subordinates' strategies vary according to their goals in impression management. Managerial consideration is often based on their impressions of their subordinates, and perceptions of their influence style. Wayne and Ferris (1990), for instance, found that the use of ingratiation tactics by employees to deliver upward feedback was positively associated with superior liking and performance ratings. On the other hand, however, subordinate assertiveness may lead to unfavourable impressions (Rao et al, 1995).

This study examines the impact that impression management has on critical feedback, with particular emphasis on ingratiation, whereby individuals seek to be viewed as agreeable or credible by employing conforming and gratifying behaviours. In doing so, employees modify their feedback accordingly. Previous research has focused on interpersonal aspects of ingratiation and reveals that individuals using ingratiation achieve high levels of organizational success and attainment. (Judge and Bretz, 1994) This research focuses on the dynamics of ingratiation processes and the manner in which they regulate the pulse of upward communication in an organisational setting.

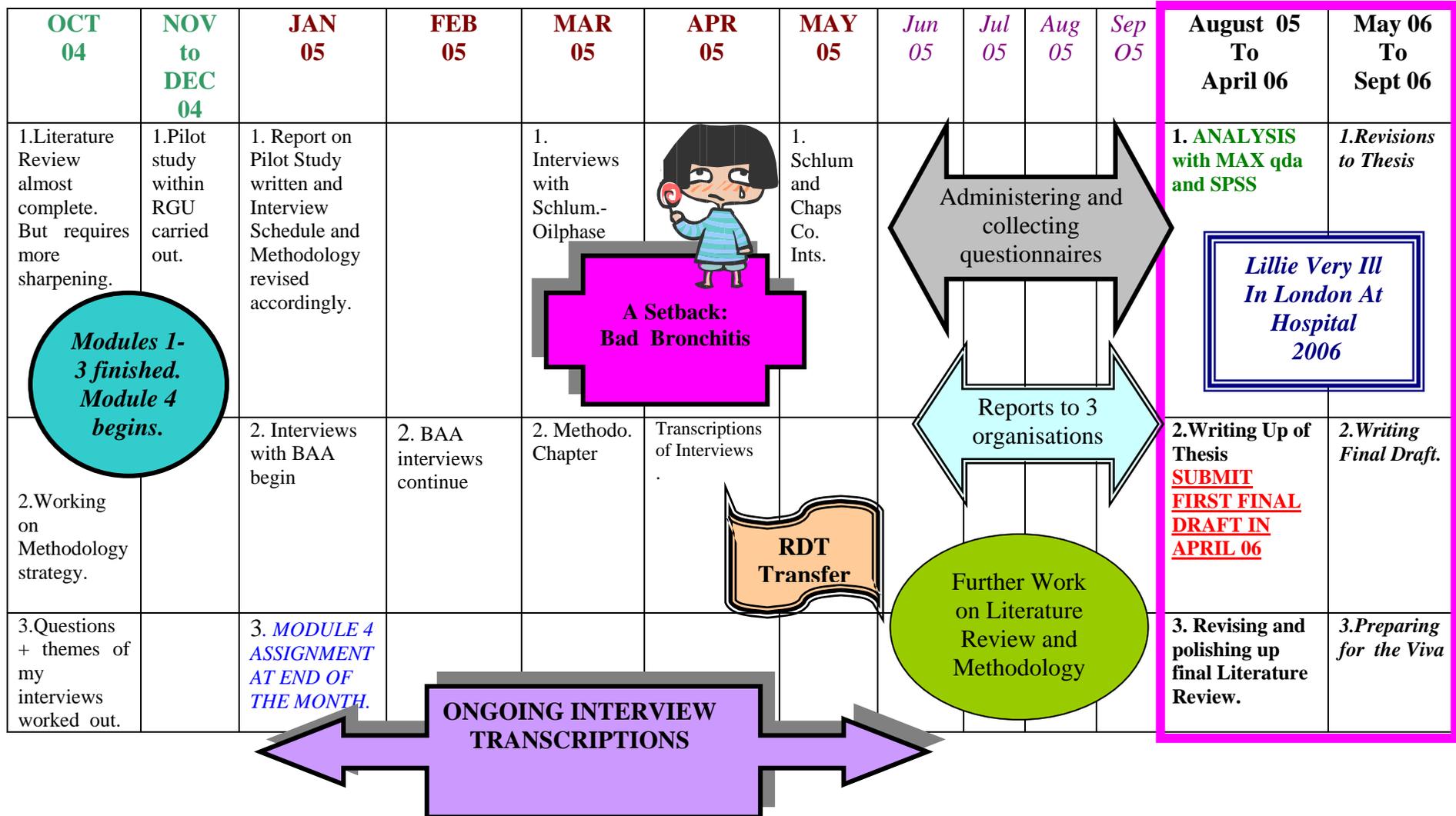
One of the most realistic explanations for problems with upward feedback can be found in ingratiation theory. Employees with a lower level of status habitually often exaggerate the extent to which they agree with the opinions and actions of higher status people, as a means of acquiring influence with them (Jones, 1990). A study by Schacter (1951) showed that more pressure toward uniformity and conformity is generated on issues relevant to the group's goals than on issues that are less relevant.' O'Reilly et al. (1987: 612) noted that 'subordinates who do not trust their superior are willing to suppress unfavourable information even if they know that such information is useful for decision making'. Furthermore, Morrison (2000) believes that, within organisations, people often have to make decisions about whether to speak up or remain silent and in many cases they choose the safe response of silence, withholding input that could be valuable to others or thoughts that they wish they could express. 'Researchers have referred to this as employee silence' (Morrison and Milliken, 2000: 707). In consequence, organisational silence could correspond to one of the important facets of ingratiation theory, Conformity; the state of deciding to be compliant and acquiescent and so repressing potentially negative information. Downs and Conrad (1982) found that subordinates were often reluctant to bring bosses bad news. People felt negatively associated with bad news or criticism.

It has been noted that when contemplating dissent, employees consider whether it will result in retaliation, or whether it will be perceived as constructive (Kassing, 2001). Trust, or its absence, is therefore a key issue in determining the availability and efficacy of upward feedback. However, as De Vries (2001: 94) has put it: 'Effective organizational functioning demands that people have a healthy disrespect for their

boss, feel free to express emotions and opinions openly, and are comfortable engaging in banter and give and take.’

Upward communication will be explored via in-depth case studies in four organisations in Scotland, in 2005.

Appendix 29: The Original Timeline.



Appendix 30
The Revised Timeline 2006-7

<u>MONTH</u>	<u>SLACK TIME/ OTHER ISSUES</u>	<u>WEEKS OF APPLIED WORK</u>	<u>PH.D SCHEDULE/TIMELINE</u>
Jan, '06 to August, '06	1. Lillie very ill	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Refining and giving a critical management edge to Methodology and Literature Review</u>
Sept., '06	Our Wedding and Honeymoon	1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Knitting together Methodology</u>
Oct., '06	1. Wolfworth's visit 2. Russell visits 3. D's Seminar in London 4. Pfeffer Day	3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Finish Methodology</u>
Nov, '06	1. Trip to Helsinki	2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Finish final Literature Review by the end of this month</u>
Dec., '06	1. Liam Kate visit 2. Cranfield Conference	2	<u>ANALYSIS</u>

	2. Christmas and Hogmanay		
Jan, '07		4	<u>ANALYSIS</u>
Feb., '07	1.Edgars visit	3	<u>ANALYSIS</u>
March,'07		4	<u>ANALYSIS (Writing up)</u>
April, May, June '07	1. Visitors/House Guests	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Introduction/Conclusion and Final Touches to Thesis</u>
July, August '07	Dennis Birthday and wee Venice Trip	6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>General Refining of Thesis</u> • <u>Prepare for Viva</u>

Appendix 31

Detailed Information on the Four Organisations

Organisation B , an Airport Company

At the heart of the offshore oil and gas industry, the Airport is one of the world's busiest commercial heliports – serving about 3 million passengers a year and offering flights to around 35 destinations.

These are exciting times for the Airport. A £10 million project to extend the main runway has been undertaken as a clear reflection of the enhancement of confidence in the economic potential of the City and Shire. In March 2005, the City Council voted to lift restrictions on opening hours – a crucial boost to the airport's ability to market the city to prospective airlines. In the next ten years alone, Organisation A, the airport authority, of about 240 people, will invest around £50 million on improvements to the terminal and airfield. A near doubling of passenger numbers is expected by 2030. Many additional jobs are being created; the cargo base is expanding. The Managing Director of the organisation has said, '... our vision for the Airport is simple. Through sustained and sensible investment in the airport's infrastructure and through the continuing development of a strong and sustainable route network, the Airport will become one of Europe's most successful regional airports, supporting the City and Shire, supporting Scotland and, ultimately, promoting social and economic prosperity for all.'

From an insider perspective, new business plans set ‘challenging but deliverable targets’ (Let’s Talk, Summary of Management Meeting, February, 2005). ‘Let’s grow Aberdeen’ plans are underway. New operating models are scheduled to drive profit and value through an airport- led business. Innovative catch-phrases, tags and slogans are engineered to try and motivate and impel the workforce. Vibrant publications like Upbeat, a traveller focussed magazine, tags like ‘Delighting the Traveller’, and pithy catch-phrases like ‘Let’s Go [City]’, ‘Let’s Talk’, ‘Airwaves’ and ‘Let’s Recognise’ are created for bulletins to energise the organisation. Appropriate employees are called ‘Ambassadors’. There is even a £5 reward vouched offered for every suggestion given by employees at the ‘Let’s Suggest’ forum. Feedback forms constitute the back cover of most organisational briefings.

A new Communications Strategy, created in 2004 mentions that, ‘.... [Organisation B] believes it is essential that its staff is informed on the progress, policies, plans and financial stability of the company. We recognise and value our staff as essential participants in the business and as such we value their feedback and will encourage them to make their opinions known on issues which affect them directly. In pursuing an effective communication policy, we aim to help staff achieve a better understanding of our objectives and policies and to gain your commitment to them.

- It is important to create a climate within the company which is conducive to effective, timely, and up to date communication

- Communication is a two way process and management has the responsibility of ensuring that staff are able to communicate their views as well as to communicate to them.
- Different media channels are required to suit the needs of all

The channels of communication within the organisation are well delineated ‘Our Supervisors/Managers are a key communication link with the Company. It is their job to keep you informed about what is happening in your own department and the airport in general, answer any immediate questions you may have, and pass on your views/concerns to the relevant parties.’

Furthermore, ‘We have a team brief process in place. Through a cascade system, employees are kept informed by their line managers of information discussed at the monthly management meetings. Staff is then given the opportunity to provide feedback on the process and information provided.

Success is measured by the:

- Number of attendees
- Volume of feedback
- Response rate to questions raised
- Number of visits to Team Talk page on intranet site

Furthermore, a direct e mail account to the local MD gives staff the opportunity to put questions directly to the Managing Director. This creates a channel for upward and downward communication for the head of the company.

Finally, the following events are open to all employees to express their feedback:

- Staff communications sessions
- Breakfast meetings, lunch and learn sessions etc
- MD yearly visit
- Local MD road-shows to be held quarterly
- Chief Executives visit

Unmistakably, there is an impressive commitment from the Managing Director and his management team to look forward, and develop the business and its people. There is a strong focus on 'leadership and engagement', driven by top management in the organisation. According to the confidential Feedback Report, March 2005, 'Senior managers continue to maintain a supportive and enabling culture, and genuinely value the efforts of their people. The focus on providing learning and training opportunities for all employees continues to be maintained and further developed. On the whole, people feel well supported and confirm equality of access to development activities..... People at all levels are actively encouraged to contribute to the forward plans for the airport and have a sound understanding of the commercial and business drivers impacting on the organisation. Performance planning, combined with personal development planning, ensures that people's development is closely aligned to the

Company's commercial and operational objectives. Monitoring and self-review, through rigorous audit procedures, are particularly strong features in the organisation. Expansive resources are allocated to the learning and development of the Company's workforce, with elements of diversity and succession planning, and leadership and management development featuring considerably in the organisation's priorities. '

However, no reference is made to the redundancies or systematic down-sizing that are taking place within the organisation.

Organisation P, A Small Oil Company

This organisation of about 35 people is a small oil company, a specialist division of a global conglomerate. It specialises in reservoir fluid sampling and analysis service and optimizes production decisions with a global network of sampling operation and reservoir fluid analysis centres. Furthermore, it has industry-leading technology for mercury-free reservoir fluid sampling, well-site analysis, sample management, fluid phase behaviour, and flow assurance laboratory studies.

This technology is known and respected throughout the industry for providing innovative answers to assist customers with fluid sampling and well site analysis needs. The company provides customers around the world with the most comprehensive range of cased-hole, open-hole, and well-site sampling and analysis services for phase behavior and flow assurance studies. Its services include bottom hole sampling, sample management, surface sampling, sample bottle service and supply, improved oil recovery (IOR) studies, solid deposition studies, well site analytical services, and laboratory pressure, volume, temperature (PVT) analysis.

In addition, laboratory testing provides necessary data to assess the flow assurance risk. Testing defines the phase behavior and physical properties of the waxes, asphaltenes, and hydrates that are the principle causes of most oil-flow problems. With technologies that characterize fluid samples both visually and quantitatively, at realistic thermo-physical conditions, the company's services provide comprehensive flow assurance studies that are vital to the industry and can help prevent or mediate flow impairment caused by deposition of organic solids.

The fluid analysis process involves capturing the sample downhole or at surface, transferring the sample under pressure at the well site into a sample shipping receptacle, shipping the sample to a laboratory and subsequent analysis of the reservoir fluid. Reservoir fluid samples are generally captured from a water/oil gas separator vessel during well-test operations.

Its innovative and advanced fluid sampling methods determine the amount of liquid carryover in the separator gas line when conditions are stable and separation efficiency is poor. Accurate compositional and pressure-volume-temperature (PVT) analysis of formation samples require the recovered sample to remain in down-hole formation conditions. The company's multi-sample chamber and the multi-sample module of the MDT Modular Formation Dynamics Tester allow controlled, uncontaminated reservoir sampling. PVT onsite well fluid analysis service results are obtained in as little as eight hours and a full-fluid properties analysis is created by

combining measurements of the fluid's fundamental properties and predicting the next suite of properties.

Moreover, the fluid and analysis teams of experts of Organisation P supply precise, routine, and research-quality fluid property measurement services in the international fluid production, transportation, and processing industries. Besides this, their laboratories handle difficult problems that are often beyond the scope of other laboratories by creating real-world reservoir conditions with temperature ranges up to over 200 degrees centigrade and applied pressures up to 15,000 psi.

Organisation C, A Construction Company

Organisation C is large construction company. Nevertheless, it is one of the largest independently owned construction based companies in Scotland employing in excess of 200 people. Furthermore, a firm foundation in civil engineering and a wide experience of large scale projects enable the company to bring together and lead contract teams to co-ordinate design elements and guarantee the smooth running of the most complex build programmes. The immediate availability of in-house expertise in many disciplines helps to prevent time slipping on crucial projects.

The company ethos is summed up in the mission statement, 'Setting the Standard'. With continuing investment in plant, machinery technology and their people, the organisation continues to lead rather than follow the competition. By employing their own labour force they react swiftly to changing circumstances. Established links

throughout the industry optimises flexibility of the supply chain management. Frequent repeat orders from a solid client base give the company the confidence that they will continue to set the standard for construction quality and performance in Scotland.

The company is a member of the Scottish Building Employers Federation and are currently working towards ISO 14001. A skilled estimating team ensures highly competitive tendering. While the company is not the region's cheapest contractor, it enjoys a reputation of being the best qualified to do a job correctly.

This company is remarkably people focused. In-house health and safety management ensures the correct procedures are adhered to. In today's climate of post- contract legal problems and strict health and safety issues, the company's proven track record is highly valued.

The company emphasises that its people are at the very core of its success and this makes for an agreeable and comfortable working environment. It is a matter of great pride to the directors of the company that the about 60 members of staff have been presented with an award for over 21 years service. The names are proudly displayed on a large wooden notice board in the main reception. These figures reflect the low employee turnover and acquire a special significance in light of the fact that the company has only been in existence for 28 years.

Although the management of this company does not have any formal communication

strategies or charters, the characteristic informal sociability of its communication style has been likened by many employees to being part of a large family or clan. Staff outings and activities are routine, including informal dinners, curling, fishing, golf, football and group walks. Members of staff have regularly taken part in the charity event 'Relay for Life' in aid of cancer research. The atmosphere of collegiality is apparent; employees often organise trans-atlantic or European trips together. The company's commitment to its employees is evident in its continual involvement in Scotland's Health of Work scheme, where the company has achieved many awards. The company continues to follow its belief that a healthier, happier workforce is its enormous asset and its employees enthusiastically maintain that they work 'with' the company, rather than 'for' the company.

Organisation E, An Enterprise Trust

Organisation D is an enterprise trust, a medium sized organisation of approximately 70 employees. It provides business advice and consultancy, facilitation and strategy development along with managed workspace to new and growing businesses in Grampian. Furthermore, it offers a wide range of business services from fully-funded support to bespoke business advice. Their services of this organisation include business planning, financial analysis and marketing and are available to new and established businesses. Clients are guaranteed professional and confidential advice about starting their own business. With offices throughout the north east of Scotland, Organisation C provides local delivery of its services to the business community.

Links with businesses, community groups and agencies help to foster the understanding of 'enterprise' in the wider context.

The organisation employs a specialist team of accredited business advisers, who have a wide range of commercial experience in providing professional services to pre-start, new and established businesses. In addition, the enterprise trust nurtures and encourages entrepreneurs through a programme which offers networking and learning opportunities. It also specialises in management and leadership training, team development, health and safety programmes and corporate events.

This enterprise trust supports approximately 900 new businesses to develop their ideas and begin trading and is proud of the fact that businesses supported by them have a survival rate in excess of the average in Scotland, with 83% of new start businesses reaching their fourth year.

Moreover, it leases serviced, purpose built offices, workshop units and meeting rooms with flexible leases and extensive 'virtual office' and supporting services throughout the region. Social events, meetings and seminars sponsored by the organisation are a great way to learn about business issues, make new contacts, share experiences and exchange information. Encouraging new enterprise and rewarding entrepreneurial spirit, the annual business awards ceremony recognises the achievements of new, young and established businesses. Such events hosted by this enterprise organisation provide a platform to discuss motivation in business, dealing with employment legislation and how to network effectively.

Appendix 32: The First Interview Schedule

INTERVIEW AGENDA

- Exploring the upward communication channels, connections existing
- Ways in which secure the info needed for their jobs
- Reactions to formal and informal upward communication channels
- How this affects (or does not affect) organisation goals
- Employee suggestions for employment

Interview Guide Questions

1. Interview and explain purpose of this interview
2. Identify name and position of employee or interviewee
3. Describe your position in the organisation?
 - chief responsibilities and duties
 - with who and on which levels you communicate and receive communication
 - the chain of command in the organisation
4. Describe the way in which decisions are made in your organisation
 - Informal/formal
 - Policies
 - Info sharing
4. Describe your unit's or organisation's primary objectives for the year.
5. What are your personal objectives
6. What communication strategies does one use to achieve them? What kinds of communication is necessary for you to have with other work unit?
7. Describe formal and informal channels in which you typically send and receive info?
 - What kind of info? Examples?
 - How often is this done?
8. Describe the general communication climate of the organisation.
 - Describe the communication strengths of the organisation
 - Describe the communication weaknesses of the organisation
9. What is the greatest unresolved communication issue or problem in the organisation?
 - What could be done to improve upward communication ?
 - What is the main obstacle to this being achieved
 - If you could make one suggestion to this being realised, what would it be?
10. Describe the upward communication relationship
 - with your supervisor
 - from your subordinates
 - with top management
11. How would you say that most people communicate with managers? (Ingratiation theory here)

12. When you have a criticism of your superior or an important issue, what do you do?
13. Could you think of a critical issue, or an example, when you found yourself suppressing your ideas and opinions or exaggerating how much you agreed with the opinion of your supervisor? How did your boss respond to this?
14. How do you get ideas about how your supervisors feel about an idea you advanced?
15. How would you evaluate your management in terms of response to your ideas?
16. Does the style/manner/level of your ability to communicate and receive information affect
 - your job satisfaction
 - your productivity levels
15. What criteria for effective upward communication are used in this organisation?
 - Does this compare realistically with the way people talk about communication?
16. In terms of upward communication what kinds of filtering devices are planned into your system?
17. Is there anything that I left out that I should have included?

EXTRA QUESTIONS

1. Have there been any significant changes in upward communication lately?
2. What motivates people in the organisation now? What are their principal concerns? How is the upward communication relating to these concerns and needs?
3. Let us discuss you as the sender of information –upward communication:
 - How do you know what to send/convey to others
 - How do you make the decision to communicate in a particular style?
 - What happens when you send upward communication to your immediate supervisor, top/middle management
 - What are the greatest lags or blocks?
 - If there are impediments/barriers to upward communication, either within or without your consciousness or control, how do you deal with them?
 - What kinds of informal techniques get the best results for you?
 - Ingratiation theory..... Conformity, other enhancement, self presentation; how they might be used to gain results?
 - How are formal channels structured? Are they effective?
4. How much input do you feel you have in decisions made by upper management?
5. In what types of situation is your input necessary/important?
6. What type of information is needed from you in order to make organisational decisions?
7. How much weight does your input carry?
8. How important are managerial meetings?

9. How important/how many should they be?

INTRODUCE THE VISUAL PROP TABLE ON INGRATIATION AND IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT. ASK WHAT METHODS THE INTERVIEWEE HAS SEEN BEING USED OR USED HIMSELF.

MANAGEMENT LEVEL INTERVIEWS

1. What do you think of the strengths and weaknesses of communication in your organisation? What are the strengths and weaknesses of upward communication in your organisation? Do you think employees perceive them?
2. What strengths do you think the employees will mention?
3. What weaknesses do you think the employees will mention?
4. How accurate do you think their assessment is and why?
5. A number of our questions deal with employees' perceptions of upper management. What perceptions do you think employees have of upper management and why?
6. In other organisations we found that employees' desire increased opportunities to communicate upward on such matters as suggestions for improvement. Do you think that we might find this here? How would you feel about this?
7. Many employees often indicate a desire for a more evaluative and informative feedback through face to face communication. What are the factors involved in giving them this? Would it improve productivity? Would it improve job satisfaction?
8. Has there any significant change in upward communication patterns recently?
9. What are the communication concerns reflected in your organisational strategies?
10. Are there any additional areas we need to cover?

The Revised Interview Questions

Guide Questions

BEGIN WITH A TOTAL AND COMPLETE ASSURANCE OF CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY OF THE CONTENTS OF THE INTERVIEW.

(This interview will first identify the name and position of the interviewee.)

General Questions to set the tone.

- **Describe your position in the organisation?**
- **With whom do you communicate? About what? How often?**
- What is your most important organisational objective for the year?
- What role does communication play in helping you achieve your objectives?

More Specific Questions on Upward Communication

- **Tell me how communication works in the organisation?**
- **Describe the communication strengths of the organisation**
- **Describe the communication weaknesses of the organisation**
- **What is the greatest unresolved communication issue or problem in the organisation?**
- **What could be done to improve communication from non-managers to senior managers?**
- **What is the main obstacle to this being achieved?**
- **If you could make one suggestion to this being realised, what would it be?**
- **Describe the communication relationship**
 - with your supervisor
 - from your subordinates
 - with top management
- **How would you say that most people communicate with managers?**
- **In your view, does senior management have an accurate impression of how employees feel about key organisational issues?**

An Individual Standpoint of Upward Communication Styles/Tactics

- **Could we discuss you as the sender of information –upward communication?**
 - **How do you know what to send/convey to others?**
 - **How do you make the decision to communicate in a particular style?**
 - **What happens when you send upward communication to your immediate supervisor, top/middle management?**
 - **What are the greatest blocks or impediments?**
 - **If there are barriers to upward communication, how do you deal with them?**
 - **What kinds of informal techniques get the best results for you?**

- (Please do have a look at the Table on Impression Management Tactics. Wee Explanation from me) Which of these tactics have you observed your colleagues/peers use? Which of these tactics would you use?
- How are formal channels structured? Are they effective?
- When you have a criticism of or a different opinion to your superior on the organisational in general, what do you do?
- Could you think of a critical issue, or an example, when you find yourself suppressing your ideas and opinions?
- Do you sometimes exaggerate how much you agree with the opinion of your boss?
- How did your supervisors react when you advance a critical opinion about the organisation?
- How responsive is management to employee ideas?

Optionals

- Have there been any significant changes in upward communication lately?
- What motivates people in the organisation now? What are their principal concerns? How is the upward communication relating to these concerns and needs?
- How much input do you feel you have in decisions made by upper management?
- In what types of situation is your input necessary/important?
- What type of information is needed from you in order to make organisational decisions?
- How much weight does your input carry?

Management Level Interview Guide Questions

1. Please describe your upward communication patterns.
 - i. I.e. communication from your subordinates to you.
 - ii. Your own upward communication to your superior, the Principal?
2. Could you please identify the strengths and weaknesses of communication in your organisation? What are the strengths and weaknesses of upward communication in your organisation?
3. What strengths do you think the employees will mention (upward communication)?
4. What weaknesses do you think the employees will mention (upward communication)?
5. A number of our questions deal with employees' perceptions of upper management. What perceptions do you think employees have of upper management and why?
6. Many employees often indicate a desire for a more feedback through face to face communication. What are the factors involved in giving them this? What benefits would it deliver? Would it improve job satisfaction?
7. Has there any significant change in upward communication patterns recently?
8. What steps have you considered to implement other measures to enhance upward communication?
9. Have you implemented these steps? If not, why?

Appendix: 33
Revised Interview Schedule
Guide Questions

THIS INTERVIEW BEGINS WITH A TOTAL AND COMPLETE ASSURANCE OF CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY OF THE CONTENTS OF THE INTERVIEW. THE INTERVIEWEES WILL NOT BE IDENTIFIABLE BY DESCRIPTION AND THE DATA WILL BE DEALT WITH IN SUCH A MANNER THAT IT WILL BE IMPOSSIBLE TO IDENTIFY ITS SOURCE OR AUTHORS.

(This interview will first identify the name and position of the interviewee.)

General Questions to set the tone.

- **Describe your position in the organisation?**
- **With whom do you communicate? About what? How often?**
- What is your most important organisational objective for the year?
- What role does communication play in helping you achieve your objectives?

More Specific Questions on Upward Communication

- **Tell me how communication works in the organisation?**
- **Describe the communication strengths of the organisation**
- **Describe the communication weaknesses of the organisation**
- **What is the greatest unresolved communication issue or problem in the organisation?**
- **What could be done to improve communication from non-managers to senior managers?**
- **What is the main obstacle to this being achieved?**
- **If you could make one suggestion to this being realised, what would it be?**
- **Describe the communication relationship**
 - with your supervisor
 - from your subordinates
 - with top management
- **How would you say that most people communicate with managers?**
- **In your view, does senior management have an accurate impression of how employees feel about key organisational issues?**

An Individual Standpoint of Upward Communication Styles/Tactics

- **Could we discuss you as the sender of information –upward communication?**
 - **How do you know what to send/convey to others?**
 - **How do you make the decision to communicate in a particular style?**
 - **What happens when you send upward communication to your immediate supervisor, top/middle management?**
 - **What are the greatest blocks or impediments?**
 - **If there are barriers to upward communication, how do you deal with them?**
 - **What kinds of informal techniques get the best results for you?**
 - **(Please do have a look at the Table on Impression Management Tactics. Wee Explanation from me) Which of these tactics have you observed your colleagues/peers use? Which of these tactics would you use?**
 - **How are formal channels structured? Are they effective?**

- **When you have a criticism of or a different opinion to your superior on the organisational in general, what do you do?**
- **Could you think of a critical issue, or an example, when you find yourself suppressing your ideas and opinions?**
- **Do you sometimes exaggerate how much you agree with the opinion of your boss?**
- **How did your supervisors react when you advance a critical opinion about the organisation?**
- **How responsive is management to employee ideas?**

Optionals

- Have there been any significant changes in upward communication lately?
- What motivates people in the organisation now? What are their principal concerns? How is the upward communication relating to these concerns and needs?
- How much input do you feel you have in decisions made by upper management?
- In what types of situation is your input necessary/important?
- What type of information is needed from you in order to make organisational decisions?
- How much weight does your input carry?

Management Level Interview Guide Questions

1. **Please describe your upward communication patterns.**
 - i. **I.e. communication from your subordinates to you.**
 - ii. **Your own upward communication to your superior, the Principal?**
2. **Could you please identify the strengths and weaknesses of communication in your organisation? What are the strengths and weaknesses of upward communication in your organisation?**
3. **What strengths do you think the employees will mention (upward communication)?**
4. **What weaknesses do you think the employees will mention (upward communication)?**
5. **A number of our questions deal with employees' perceptions of upper management. What perceptions do you think employees have of upper management and why?**
6. **Many employees often indicate a desire for a more feedback through face to face communication. What are the factors involved in giving them this? What benefits would it deliver? Would it improve job satisfaction?**
7. **Has there any significant change in upward communication patterns recently?**
8. **What steps have you considered to implement other measures to enhance upward communication?**
9. **Have you implemented these steps? If not, why?**

Appendix 34: A Table of Tactics Used By Employees While Communicating With Supervisors

Please indicate which of these behaviours you have seen used more frequently than others, often or not at all?

<u>BEHAVIOUR</u>	<u>DEFINITIONS</u>
<u>1. SELF-DESCRIPTIONS</u>	<i>Descriptive statements made by the subordinate to describe himself/herself in a favourable manner that would make the supervisor think well of him/her.</i>
<u>2. ORGANISATION DESCRIPTIONS</u>	<i>Favourable descriptive statements made by a subordinate to describe the organisation he belongs to.</i>
<u>3. OPINION CONFORMITY</u>	<i>Expressions of agreement and conformity by the subordinate.</i>
<u>4. ACCOUNTS</u>	<i>A subordinate explaining an event or situation to his boss, minimising the severity or negativity of the event.</i>
<u>5. APOLOGIES</u>	<i>Admissions of blameworthiness for an undesirable event, coupled with an attempt by the actor to obtain goodwill from the superior.</i>
<u>6. ACCLAIMING</u>	<i>The subordinate publicly commending the superiors/unit's achievements and successes, maximising their implications.</i>
<u>7. OTHER-ENHANCEMENT</u>	<i>Efforts by the subordinate to increase his or her credibility and likeability through the use of favourable evaluations of the boss's attributes.</i>
<u>8. RENDERING FAVOURS</u>	<i>Doing something nice for the boss to gain his favour and approval.</i>
<u>9. REMAINING SILENT</u>	<i>Deciding not to express a contrary or conflicting opinion and remaining silent/quiet.</i>

Appendix 35: Management Level Interview Schedule

- A bit about yourself,
- Your age
- Tenure with the company
- Work experience
- Your responsibilities
- Position

1. Please describe your upward communication patterns.
 - i. Communication from your subordinates to you.
 - ii. Your own upward communication to your superior?
2. Could you please identify the strengths and weaknesses of communication in your organisation?
3. What strengths do you think the employees will mention (upward communication)?
4. What weaknesses do you think the employees will mention (upward communication)?
5. A number of our questions deal with employees' perceptions of upper management. Do you think that employees have an accurate perception of upper management?
6. Many employees often indicate a desire for a more feedback through face to face communication. What are the factors involved in giving them this? What benefits would it deliver? Would it improve job satisfaction?
7. Has there any significant change in upward communication patterns recently?
8. What steps have you considered to implement other measures to enhance upward communication?
9. Your perception of leadership? Your own style of leadership? The importance of leadership?
10. Could you think of an instance when an employee fairly down the chain communicated with you on a critical issue?
11. What is your reaction to impression management and ingratiation from subordinates as they are communicating with you? **PLEASE SEE TABLE ON INGRATIATING BEHAVIOURS ; HAVE YOU SEEN THESE USED? WHICH BEHAVIOURS HAVE YOU SEEN MORE THAN OTHERS? HOW DO YOU REACT TO THEM?**
12. *How have the new communication strategies affected communication within the organisation? (Organisation B)*
13. *What is your perception of how downsizing could affect upward communication in the organisation? (Organisation B)*

Appendix 36:
A Very Short Interview Schedule for Participants in a Rush
Guide Questions

THIS INTERVIEW BEGINS WITH A TOTAL AND COMPLETE ASSURANCE OF CONFIDENTIALITY AND ANONYMITY OF THE CONTENTS OF THE INTERVIEW. THE INTERVIEWEES WILL NOT BE IDENTIFIABLE BY DESCRIPTION AND THE DATA WILL BE DEALT WITH IN SUCH A MANNER THAT IT WILL BE IMPOSSIBLE TO IDENTIFY ITS SOURCE OR AUTHORS.

(This interview will first identify the name and position of the interviewee and the amount of years the person has been with the organisation.)

General Questions to set the tone.

- Describe your position in the organisation?

An Individual Standpoint of Upward Communication Styles/Tactics

- Could we discuss you as the sender of information –upward communication?
 - How do you know what to send/convey to others?
 - If there are barriers to upward communication, how do you deal with them?
 - What kinds of informal techniques get the best results for you?
 - *(Please do have a look at the Table on Impression Management Tactics. Wee Explanation from me).* Which of these tactics have you observed your colleagues/peers use? Which of these tactics would you use?
 - When you have a criticism of or a different opinion to your superior on the organisational in general, what do you do?
- Could you think of a critical issue, or an example, when you find yourself suppressing your ideas and opinions?
- Do you sometimes exaggerate how much you agree with the opinion of your boss?
- How did your supervisors react when you advance a critical opinion about the organisation?

Appendix 37: Ethics in the Research.

The researcher to:

- contact the CEO'S OF organization/s,
- explain the focus of my research in an open manner
- request their consent to conduct interviews etc.



Data Gathering:

- The exact scope and focus of my research explained to participants.
- Participants need to be willing to participate in the interviews; no persuasion or force used to sway them.
- Participants to be assured that their responses will be treated confidentially.
- Audit responses administered well away from the scrutiny of managers.
- Anonymity guaranteed.
- Participants selected randomly; the aim of the exercise is not to single employees out with a view to imposing sanctions.
- Audit responses administered well away from the scrutiny of managers to ensure the total credibility of assurances of confidentiality.



Data Analysis:

- No names will be used in data analysis to guarantee anonymity to the participants.
- Data will not, under any conditions, be disseminated to the senior management who authorised the research.



The Findings:

- The Analysis and Findings.
- Issues of Confidentiality are also relevant. Care must be taken that they are represented in such a manner as to protect the identities of the participants.

Appendix 38: Comments from the 2004 Survey on Job Security, Communication, Community, Pay and Benefits and Recognition, that prompted the Communication Strategy, 2005

- Communication is improving and is 2-way. Levels of involvement in business planning are increasing but there is a long way to go.
- There is very little opportunity for the shop floor workers to have a say in what happens to their working environment before things take place. (i.e. central search refurbishment.)
- I feel that communication should be improved
- Not the best time for the survey awaiting information on a new restructure and not sure how it will look at present awaiting job tasks and roles to be defined.....
- There is bad communication within [the company]. Also where I work staff morale is low.
- Changes in our working place are going on around us and no one tells us what is happening. Too much whispering and secrets within management team. Their attitude seems to be 'they are only the workers they don't need to know yet!' it makes all staff feel very insecure.... Morale at this [company] has never been so low...
- Due to recent structural changes within the department the general feeling is "unsettled" and responsibilities have been taken away with no consultation.
- I personally enjoy my role within [the company... however I feel that job security has dropped recently and have observed experienced staff move on out of the company which is disconcerting
- I would like to think that my job is secure but who knows what will happen to [the company] in the future.
- The company has changed so much.... The job security feeling has gone - staffs are concerned about their future.

Appendix 39 : Excerpts From The Communications Strategy, 2005, That Followed The Survey, 2004

‘[The company] believes it is essential that its staff is informed on the progress, policies, plans and financial stability of the company. We recognise and value our staff as essential participants in the business and as such we value their feedback and will encourage them to make their opinions known on issues which affect them directly. In pursuing an effective communication policy, we aim to help staff achieve a better understanding of our objectives and policies and to gain your commitment to them.’ (Communications Strategy Document: 1)

‘We firmly believe that an informed employee is an effective employee. So we take very seriously the question of communication in all its aspects. We want our employees to be in the picture about their work, how they fit in, how well they are doing, what the company is doing and where it is going.’ (Communications Strategy Document: 1)

Channels of Communication:

- **Your Supervisor/Manager**
- **PC Access to All**
- **Open Communications Events**

- **Intranet Site**

- **E Mail To MD**

This direct e- mail account to the local MD gives staff the opportunity to put questions directly to [the Managing Director]. This creates a channel for upward and downward communication for the MD.

This, however, is not an idea that the Managing Director personally endorses in his interview.

- ***A marked accent on downwards communication and not upwards communication noted.***

- ***No reference is made to the issue of Downsizing in the organisation.***

Appendix 40 : Slides from Management Presentation in March 2005

Responses to Question 1:

On the scale below, please can you tick how effective you believe current communications methods are:-

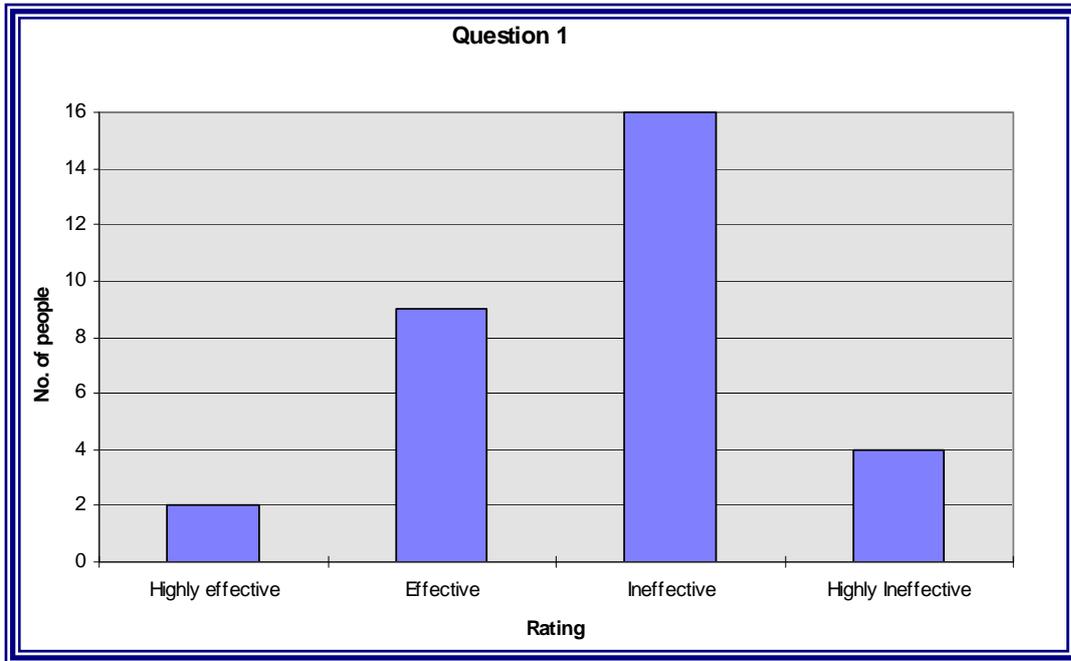
Highly Effective

Effective

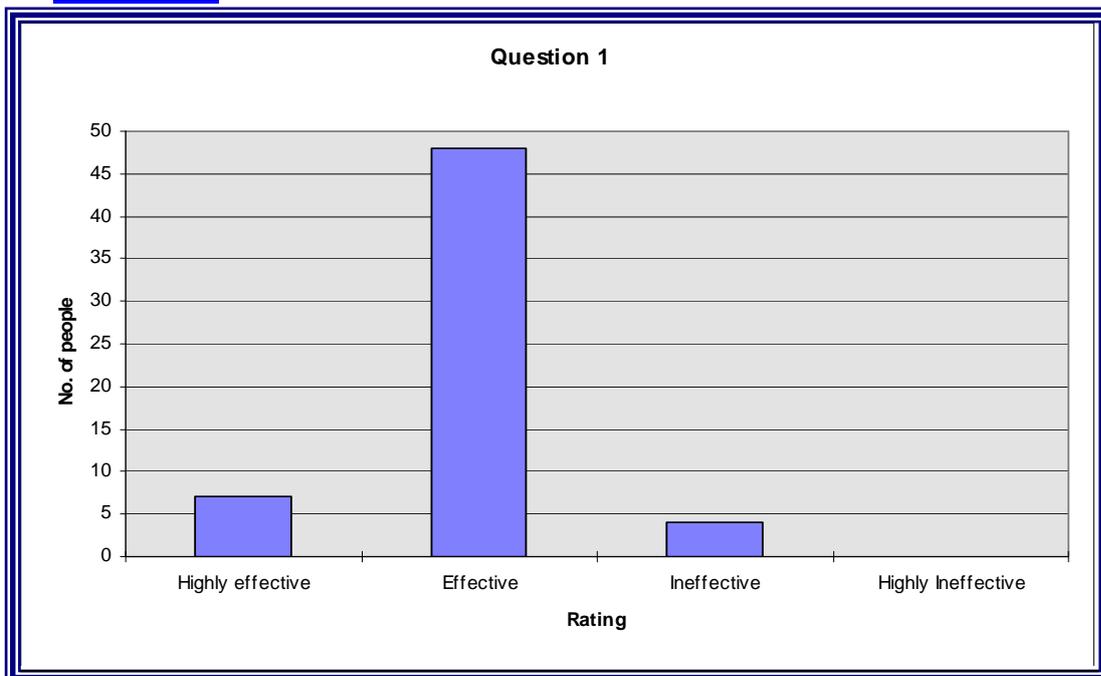
Ineffective

Highly Ineffective

August 2003



March 2004



SUMMARY OF PRESENTATION. MARCH 2005

August 2003

March 2004

Communication: 50% ineffective

81% effective

Good methods: Staff Bulletins

Staff Communication ,
Intranet
Team Briefings are good
E-mail is excellent

Preferred 1. Staff Communication.

1. Team Briefings

Methods:

2. E-mail
3. Team Briefings

2. E-mail
3. Staff Communication
& Intranet

Appendix 41: A Précis of the Communication Document of Organisation E, June '05

This classified document, that represents a snapshot of a frozen moment in time (June, 2005) was commissioned by the management of Organisation E. It is made up of the responses of 43 members of staff, comprising 70 % of the work force. The issues mentioned in it emphasize motivation within the organisation of internal communication. Some of the excerpts relevant to this research are:

- It was mentioned that employees find the need to be 'recognised' by the management. The form of recognition desired was not associated with rewards but with better communication prototypes from the directors in the form of 'honest communication and clear direction'. 'Openness and honesty' were the key concerns that were repeatedly enunciated. Furthermore, employees voiced a need to be allowed to communicate more freely and openly with the management about issues that involved 'employees having too much or enough work and whether they are bored or de-motivated by the type of work they are doing'. A serious issue was 'motivation', a word which was used in the report as an umbrella term for the employees to feel that they were trusted and recognised; they needed to believe that 'any methods implemented are done so through the understanding of employee needs' and with some form of involvement by them into the design of these methods.
- 'Outputs are likely to be influenced by motivation...if employees trust that they will receive an accurate and honest reflection of the state of play, they respond accordingly... if the situation appears clouded, an atmosphere of distrust is generated....' This obviously has serious negative repercussions on

- One of the main areas of concern was ‘poor communication’ within the organisation. ‘Employees do appear to wish to provide suggestions for improvement but distrust the ability of the message to firstly get to the decision maker and secondly for it to be implemented within a reasonable time scale’. This results in feelings of uncertainty and apathy within the organisation. Employees expressed a need for ‘opportunities for regular team meetings, to share knowledge, to communicate company objectives and for social interaction...’
- It was quite obvious that one of the key aggravations of the employees was the feeling that ‘there was very little opportunity to speak to the management team’ and that it was difficult to do so because ‘communication may be blocked en route by line managers ... senior management can be intimidating’.
- It is ‘difficult having a part time communications manager doing a full time job’.
- ‘Communication is a huge issue... it shouldn’t be always top down but also bottom up... are employee thoughts and ideas blocked by line managers who fear that comments may undermine their jobs and management capabilities?’

- One of the specific solutions in this document was: ‘Clearer channels of communication (e.g. putting ideas and suggestions forward, a suggestions box)’.
- Finally, there was a strongly enunciated need from the employees for the top members of management to spend additional time on the ‘shop floor’ talking to and getting to know their employees. This was important so that ‘they get to know their teams better and stop listening to tittle-tattle ...if they spend time in the centres, they can hear what their employees want to say and can easily form their own opinions’.

**Appendix 42: A Short History Of Organisation P From The Perspective Of
The Managing Director**

'I did bit of consultancy for [the founder, P10-M-I-TL], working on the design of a new tool ... and then they asked me to join the company. So that was before it really started up. So I became Marketing Director of [this company]. We completed our first operations in April of 1990; it went very well. It was very exciting as we were a very small team. We patented the technology. We knew we had something good. I really enjoyed it. In 1991 we won the [X] Award for Technology even though we had only been in business for seven months. It was great.

[The mother company], they were keeping an eye on us but didn't believe in our technology. It was my job just to go out and get the business and we were quite successful and the business grew. They [the mother company] were keen on the technology but couldn't put a contract in place. At the end of 1994, we signed a contract with them and they [the mother company] agreed to support us globally on a commission basis. So that was great as there were only 25 or so of us at that time. Otherwise it would have been very difficult. [The mother company] were our agent. We were doing jobs inside the Arctic Circle because [the mother company] had a base there. So it was ideal. We grew rapidly on the back of that. We saw other opportunities for applying our technology and talked to them about that. It became obvious they weren't going to share the ownership with us so they bought us.

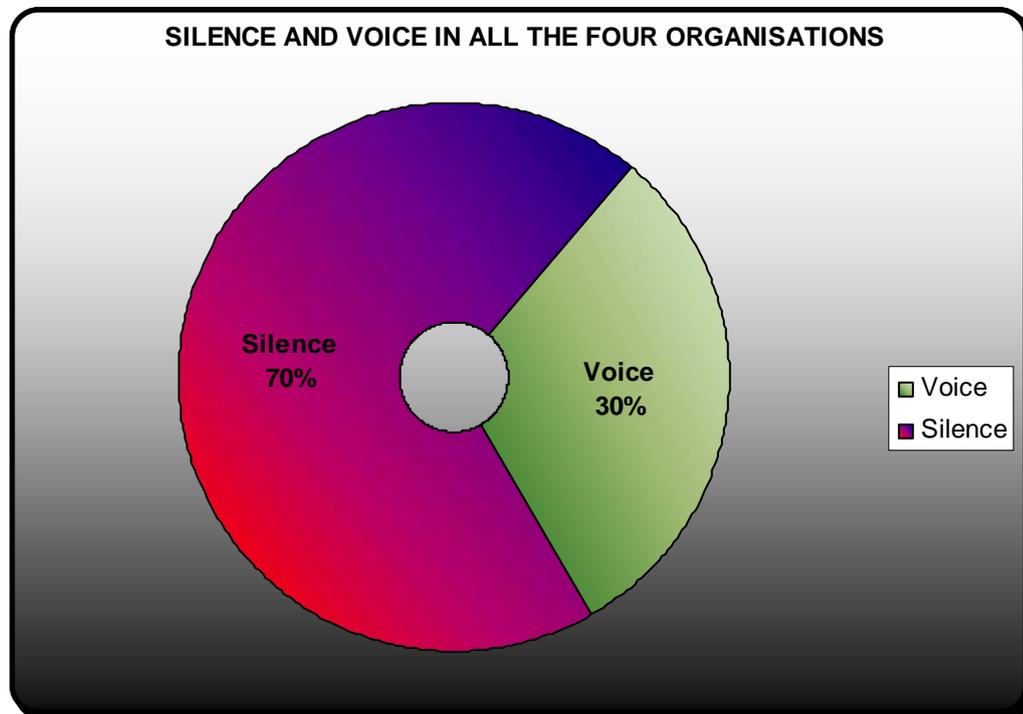
We agreed to the acquisition in 1996 and the rest is history. We were given complete control of the business and decided to spin out the business completely at the end of 2002. It had grown ten times and it has increased 30% since it was merged into [the mother company]. We can tap into lots of technology and build products for the future. [The mother company] says that [this company] is one of their best acquisitions. It's great to be part of that.

And yet...you don't get the attention you deserve sometimes in a bigger company...The human touch is important... Poor communication can contribute to gross inadequacies and poor consequences. Team spirit and communication is essential... There is no such thing as perfect communication - you just have to keep working at it'.

Appendix 43: A Pictorial Representation of the Percentages of Employee Silence and Employee Voice in the Four Organisations

- In computing the variable of employee silence in this study, responses of the employees of the four organisations were included, as were the opinions on the existence or not of employee silence, from management. Participants who had used silence were computed under the variable of 'silence'; employee participants who said they spoke up and expressed themselves or claimed to express themselves, were included in the computing of the variable of 'voice'.
- In the composite pie chart that follows, showing the proportion of employee silence and voice in all the four organisations together, 30 percent (32 participants) of the 105 interviewees felt that they had never had an occasion to be silent. 70 percent (73 participants) said that they had had occasions when they felt it would be in their best interests to remain silent or were aware that the syndrome of employee silence pervaded the ambience of the organisation.

1. A Composite Pie Chart Showing the Proportion of Employee Silence and Voice in All Four Organisations (in Percentages).



2. A Pie Chart Showing the Proportion of Employee Silence and Voice in Organisation B (in Percentages)

Organisation B had many problems that contributed to its high level of employee silence. It had a demoralised and anxious work force, which was nervous about the downsizing going on in the organisation. This impacted on their levels of trust and comfort in the organisation climate, which in turn, adversely affected the levels of upward communication employees were willing to send to their superiors. The Managing Director of the organisation was highly successful in

increasing the profits of the company but was regarded with suspicion by his employees, despite his flamboyant new communication strategies. Of the 37 participants interviewed, 3 said they always spoke up or that they were not aware of any syndrome of silence. 34 participants said that they had remained silent and/or were aware of a high level of employee silence in the organisation.

A combination of these factors, therefore, resulted in a taciturn and almost mute work force, who believed that staying silent protected their interests within the organisation. The employees in the workforce who did speak up were firstly, the airfield security staff; secondly, the older employees of the organisation who had a longer tenure in the organisation and the confidence that arose from this association. Some of them were also close to retirement and felt they had nothing to lose. The following chart reveals the silence/voice balance in Organisation B:



3. A Pie Chart Showing the Proportion of Employee Silence and Voice in Organisation E (in Percentages)

In this organisation, levels of employee silence were fairly high. Primarily, this was probably because of the autocratic management style of the CEO of the organisation. Furthermore this was an organisation that was going through a process of change; four organisations had come together to form one company and this was perceived by its employees as giving rise to a dislocated and uncomfortable climate. Problems of internal communication, including upward communication, existed in the organisation, which the CEO was attempting to resolve.

Of the 22 participants interviewed, only two said that although they accepted that there could be problems with upward communication, they were not aware of the possible syndrome of employee silence. The other 20 participants said that at some time or another in the recent past, they had or were aware of peers/employees remaining silent, for fear of speaking up.

The following chart shows the silence/voice ratio in Organisation E:



4. A Pie Chart Showing the Proportion of Employee Silence and Voice in Organisation C (in Percentages)

In Organisation C, with its high levels of trust and upward communication, there are diminutive levels of silence, a miniscule 34%. This means that out of the 32 participants interviewed, 21 of them said that they had no inhibitions to speak up and 11 said they could think of occasions when they had been silent or been aware of the syndrome of silence.

The levels of silence here may reflect the prerequisite for conformity and accord, an enhanced cultural phenomenon in an organisation that prized consensus, whether it was in the board room or the general organisation. Quite a few employees admitted to remaining silent to conform, as a mark of respect for their leader, the much admired Managing Director of the company. Those who expressed themselves openly believed that they had never had a need to be silent - levels of comfort and loyalty in this organisation were very high.

The following chart displays the silence/voice balance in Organisation C:

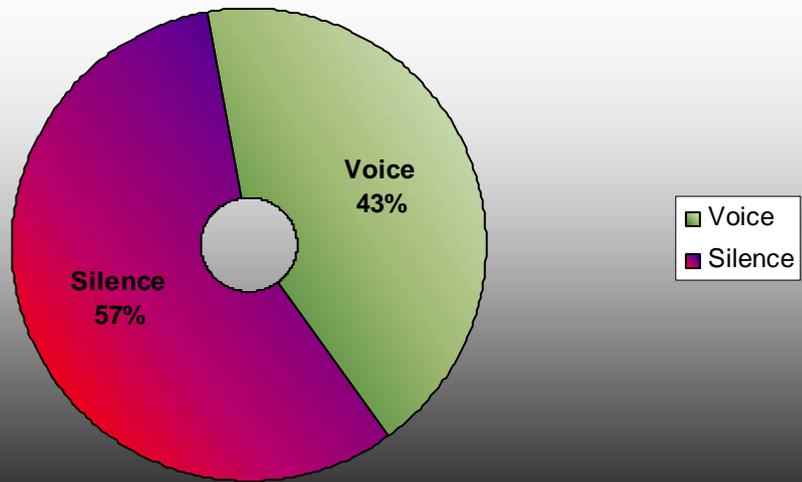


5. A Pie Chart Showing the Proportion of Employee Silence and Voice in Organisation P (in Percentages).

In this innovative high tech organisation, employees were encouraged to speak up and usually did. However, of the 14 participants interviewed, 8 admitted to being silent sometimes or aware of employee silence and 6 said that they never felt the need to be silent, or being aware of the syndrome of silence. Furthermore, quite a few of the silent employees were the highly creative, eccentric engineers who were possessive of the 'ownership of the process', as they preferred to call it. They felt that remaining silent would help them to retain ownership of their own work processes.

The following chart reveals the silence/voice ratio in Organisation P:

SILENCE AND VOICE IN ORGANISATION P



Appendix 44: The Common Link of Conformity

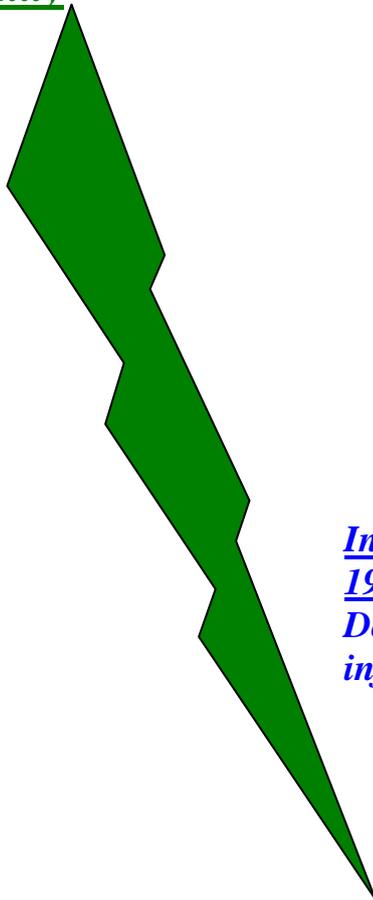
THE 'CONFORMITY' LINK

Conformity is a common facet of both, ingratiation theory (Jones, 1964) and impression management (Goffman 1959), as the figure below illustrates:

Impression Management Theory (Goffman, 1959):

A process by which a person can influence the impressions of others, through:

- 1. Self Presentation*
- 2. Conformity*



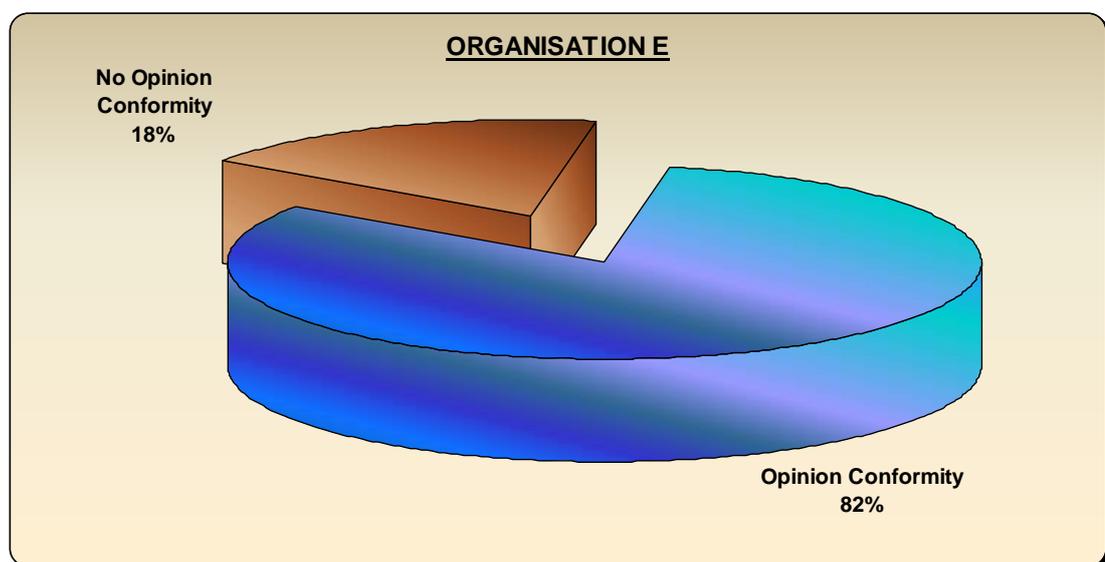
Ingratiation Theory (Jones, 1964):

Devious behaviours to acquire influence over others through:

- 1. Self-Presentation*
- 2. Other Enhancement*
- 3. Rendering Favours*
- 4. Opinion Conformity*

Appendix 45: Percentage Pie Charts To Illustrate The Use Of Opinion Conformity

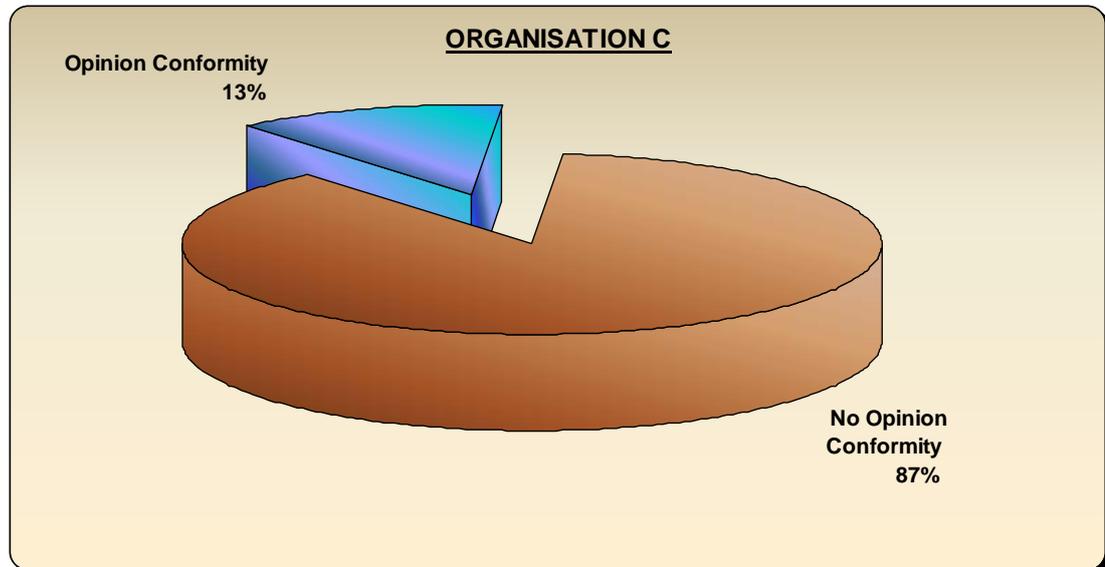
THE USE OF OPINION CONFORMITY IN ORGANISATION E



Thirty two participants were interviewed at Organisation E. Of these, eighteen of them admitted to having used opinion conformity in their upward communication with their superiors or being at the receiving end of communication tinged with opinion conformity. The following points stood out:

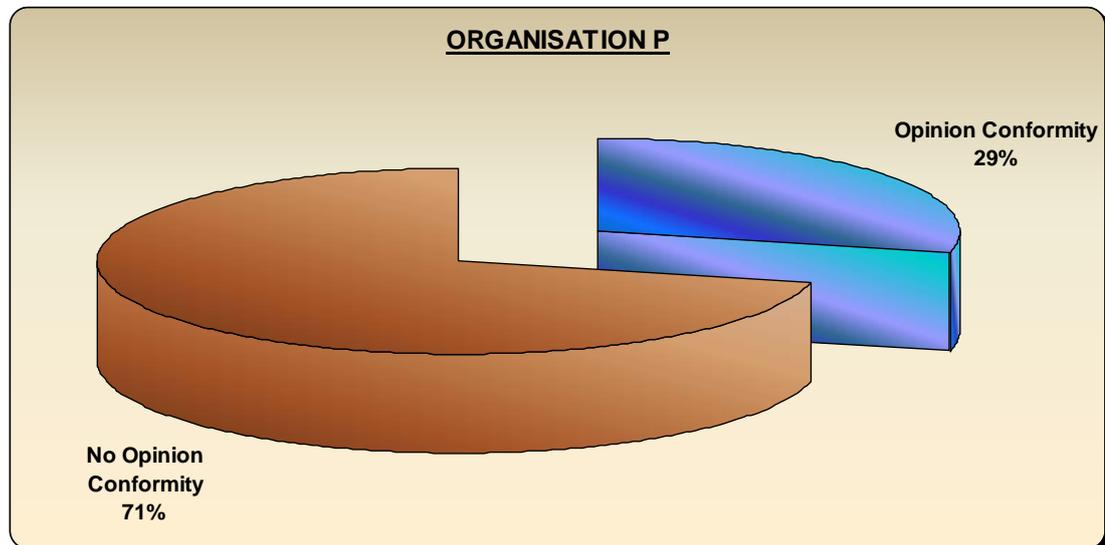
- Many employees were reluctant to engage with the researcher for fear of retaliation from management
- Many employees were intimidated by the autocratic, arbitrary management style of the CEO.

THE USE OF OPINION CONFORMITY IN ORGANISATION C



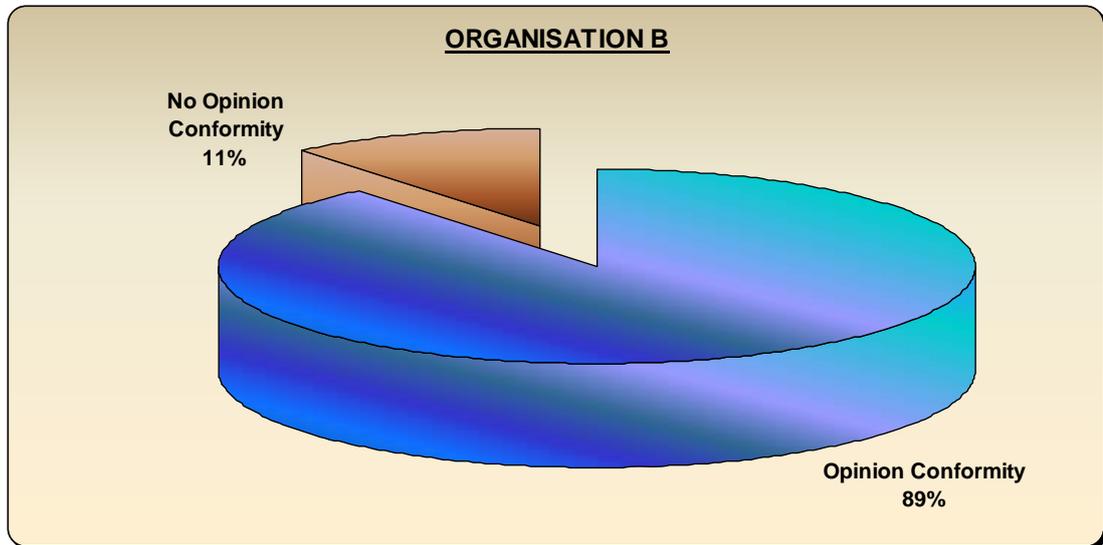
Twenty two participants were interviewed at Organisation C. Four of them said that they had used opinion conformity in their upward communication with their managers or seen it being used. Twenty eight interviewees said that they had never had any reason to use this upward influence tactic. They enjoyed a specially open and comfortable organisational climate. The leadership style of the Managing Director was participative and democratic. His employees respected him greatly. In Organisation C, 100% of the participants interviewed spoke of the open and flowing style of upward communication in the company.

THE USE OF OPINION CONFORMITY IN ORGANISATION P



In Organisation P, out of the 14 interviewees, four participants admitted to using opinion conformity while communicating with their superiors, or having experienced opinion conformity used in communications to them. Ten of the interviewees said that they did not find any need to use the tactic of opinion conformity because they were a high- tech oil organisation, where they communicated forthrightly and easily; Organisation P enjoyed a fairly open culture of upward communication, However, the researcher believes that there might be greater opinion conformity in this organisation than people admit because of the self- efficacy bias (Sutherland, 1992).

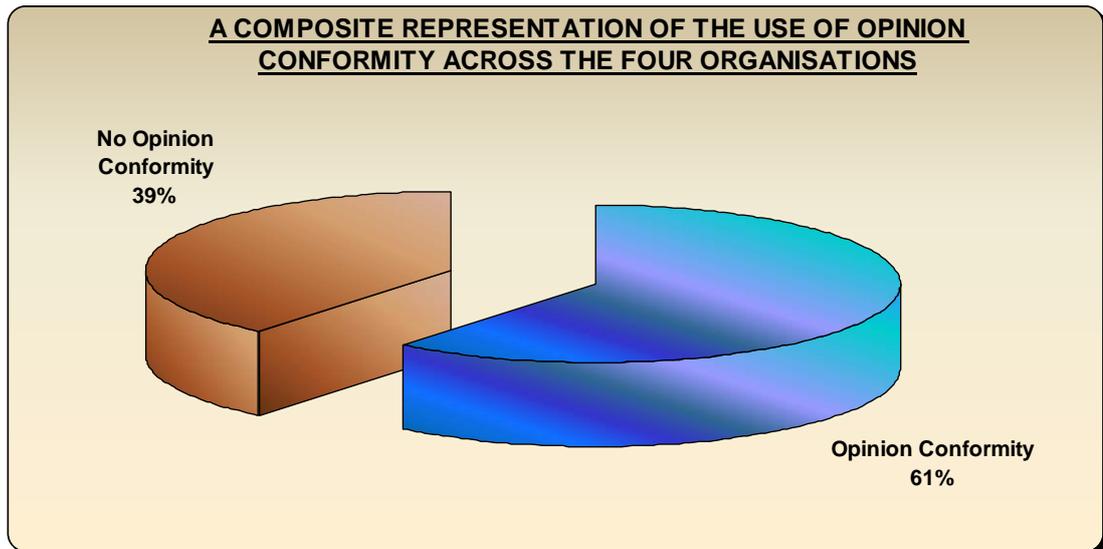
THE USE OF OPINION CONFORMITY IN ORGANISATION B



Thirty seven members of the company were interviewed at Organisation B. Of these, thirty three admitted to having used or having had used to them, the upward influence tactic of opinion conformity. Four participants said that it was not used by them or towards them. Organisation B was characterised by:

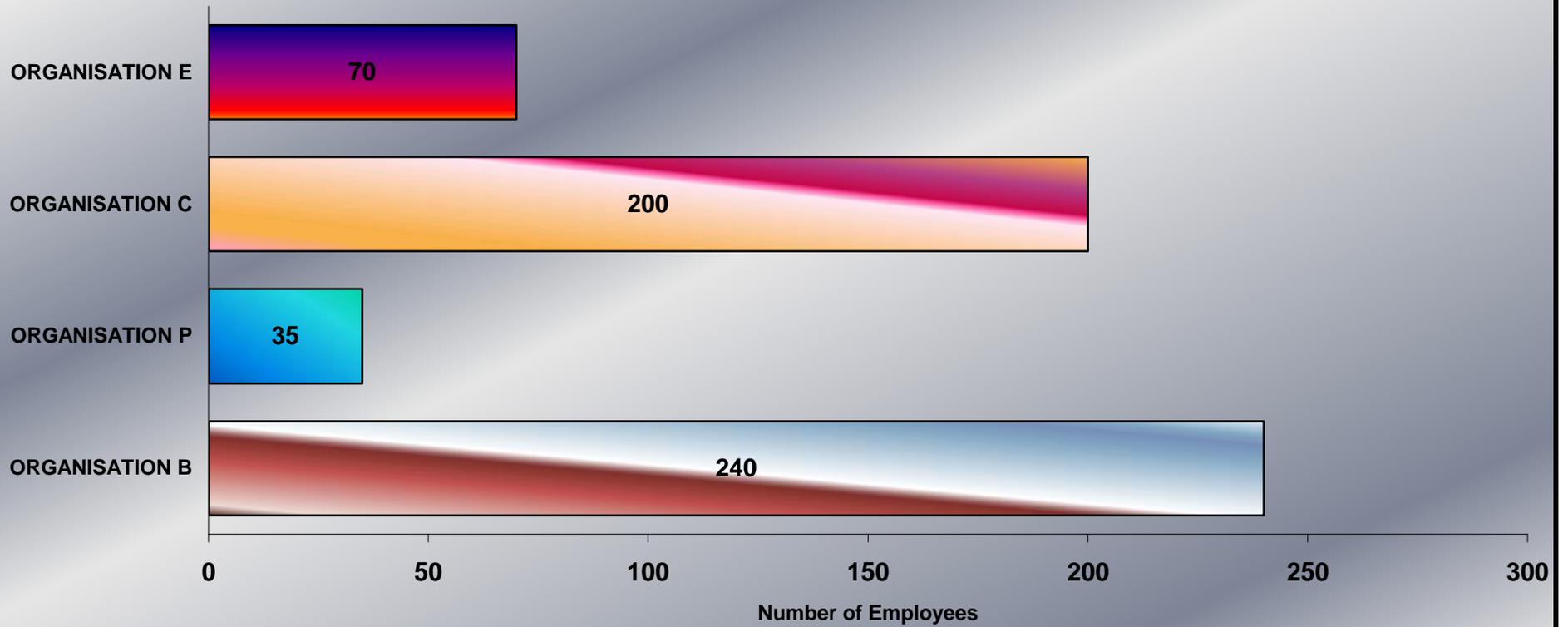
- A nervous, demoralised and anxious work force because of the downsizing that was going on
- An autocratic leader, who had just launched a myriad communication strategies, none of which addressed the issue of downsizing
- An extraordinary growth rate and a rise in profits of 30% in the last quarter.

A COMPOSITE REPRESENTATION OF THE USE OF OPINION CONFORMITY AS A TACTIC OF UPWARD INFLUENCE ACROSS THE FOUR ORGANISATIONS



Of the 105 interviews that were conducted across the breath of four organisations, 64 participants admitted that they had used opinion conformity in their communications or had had communications from subordinates tinged with opinion conformity. Forty one said that they had never had any experience of opinion conformity.

APPENDIX 46: NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES IN EACH OF THE FOUR ORGANISATIONS

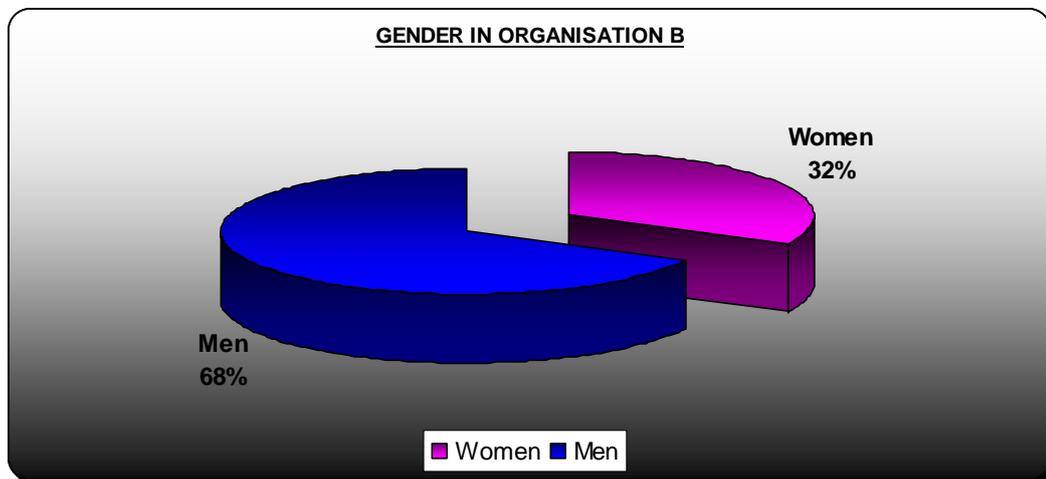


Appendix 47: Percentage Pie Charts on the Gender Balance in all the Four Organisations

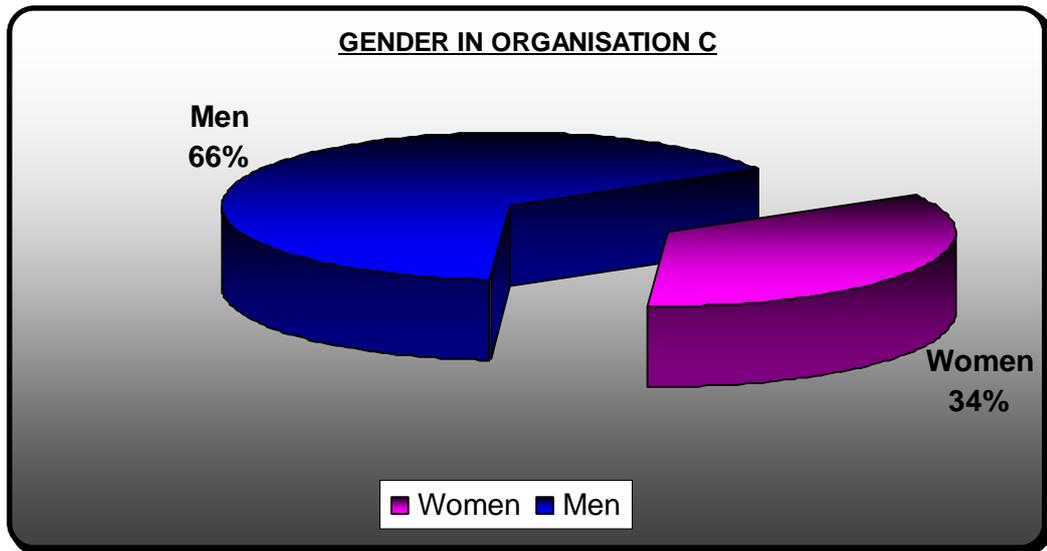
A Table showing Gender in the Sample in the Four Organisations

<u>ORGANISATION</u>	<u>WOMEN</u>	<u>MEN</u>
Organisation B	12	25
Organisation C	11	21
Organisation E	10	12
Organisation P	4	10
TOTAL	39	66

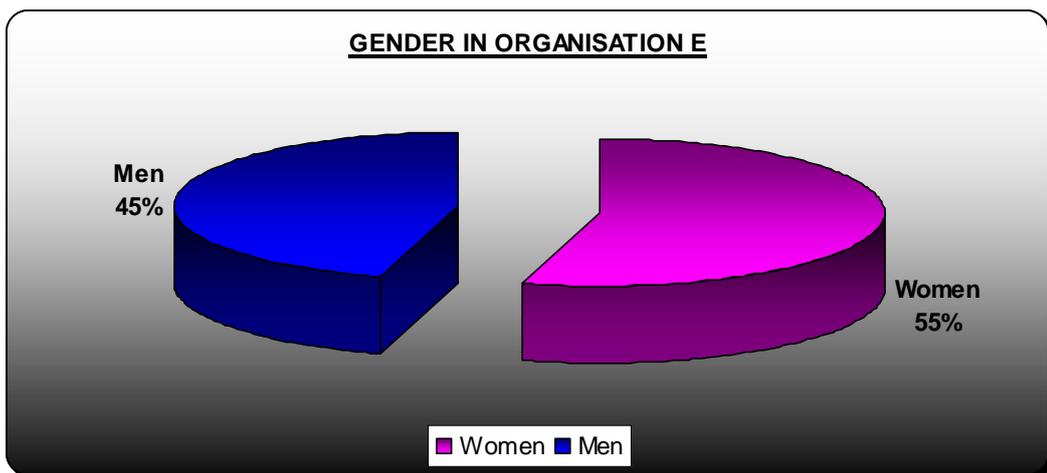
- 1. In Organisation B, There Were 25 Men and 12 Women In The Sample:**



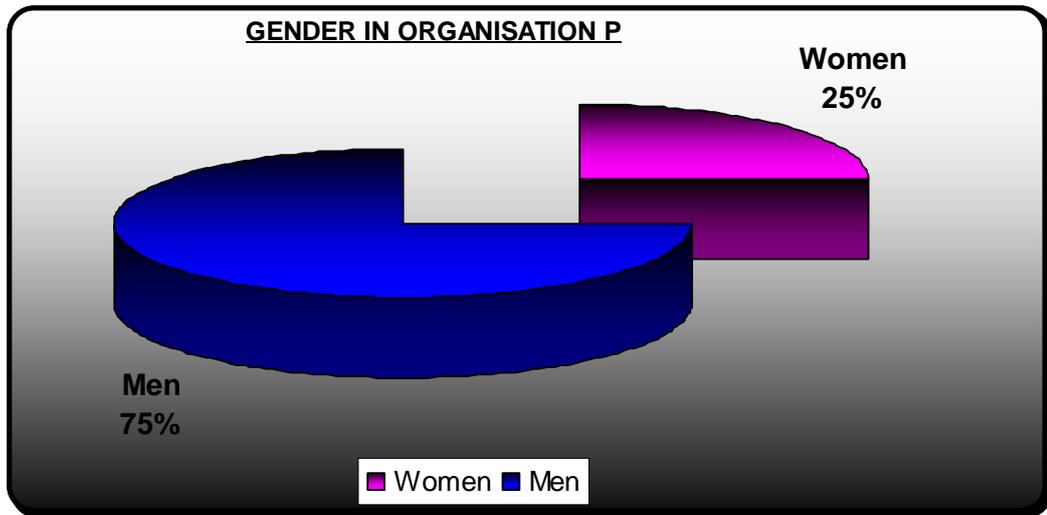
2. In Organisation C, There Were 11 Women And 21 Men In The Sample:



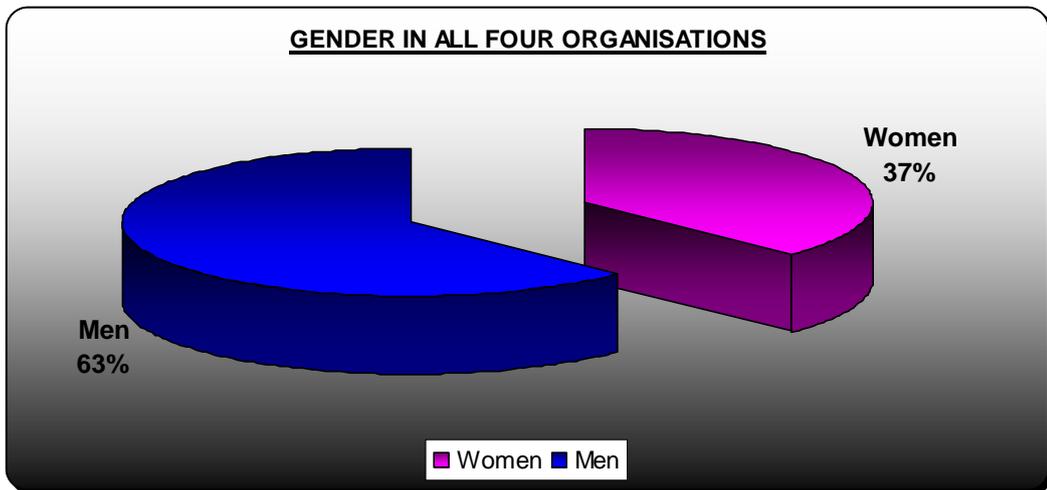
3. In Organisation E, There Were 12 Women And 10 Men In The Sample:



4. In Organisation P, There Were 4 Women And 10 Men In The Sample:



5. In Total, Within All The 4 Organisations, In The Sample of 105 Participants, There Were 39 Women and 66 Men:



Appendix 48: Leadership Styles And Upward Communication



Appendix 49: The Construct Of Conformity

*Management Obligates Employees
To Conform To Organisational Vision
(Peters and Waterman, 1982)*

**THE CONSTRUCT OF ORGANISATIONAL
CONFORMITY:
FASHIONED BY MANAGEMENT
AND REINFORCED BY EMPLOYEES**

*Employees Simultaneously Conform
To Mission Of Management
For Own Reasons,
Using Impression Management (Goffman, 1959) and
Ingratiation Theory Tactics (Jones, 1964)*

**Appendix 50: The Conformity-Silence-Cynicism
Model Of Upward Communication**

