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4

The Development of Working Relationships*

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Abstract

Human relationships are crucially important in work situations, especially among managers. This chapter presents a brief overview of the existing literature on working relationships and describes their characteristic development and the ways in which they are similar to or different from social and intimate personal relationships more generally. While working relationships develop over time, they are less adequately characterized by stage paradigms than are intimate relationships. Because working relationships generally exist to accomplish tasks while social relationships are not, task achievement, task instrumentality and task-specific competence are especially important in work relationships, while affect and self-disclosure are less important. The chapter concludes with methodological and substantive implications for research.

Human relationships are a fact of life for people of every occupation, situation, rank, and status, but they are an especially critical and pervasive aspect of a manager's life. The executives who were the subject of Mintzberg's now-classic study of managerial work spent 78% of their working time interacting with others, and as much as 50% of that time in interactions with subordinates (Mintzberg 1973, pp. 39-45). More recent studies by Stewart (1982) and Kotter (1982) provide further support for the importance of two-person ("dyadic") relationships in managerial work. Kotter found that developing a network of interpersonal relationships was critical to a general manager's ability to formulate and implement an agenda and

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that the quality of these relationships was a key determinant of managerial effectiveness (Kotter 1982, chaps. 2, 3, 4). Similarly, Liden and Graen (1980) found that subordinates reporting good relationships with superiors were better performers, assumed more responsibility, and contributed more to their units than those reporting poor relationships. The importance of interpersonal relationships as an aspect of management is documented in study after study of managerial behavior, regardless of national culture or type of management job.¹ Indeed, Weick (1969, p. 57) has argued that from a social-psychological point of view, relationships are the principal means through which organizations are controlled. Most experienced managers would agree.

Any manager regardless of position, is dependent on subordinates, peers, and superiors for his or her unit's performance. This dependency is especially important for general and upper-level managers because they typically cannot be experts in all of the functions that report to them and thus must rely on the competence of subordinates and others. Moreover, the greater the size or complexity of a manager's organization, the more difficult it is for him or her to influence all of the key variables directly, regardless of how good the company's information, control, and reward systems are. Thus much of the work of managing complex organizations occurs in the individual relationships that make up the networks described by Kotter and others.

Given the importance of these relationships, it is surprising that relatively little research has focused on the topic of how working relationships actually develop in organizations and what behaviors lead to effective relationships (Wortman & Linsenmeier, 1977). There are some notable exceptions to this generalization, such as the early work of Hodgson, Levinson, and Zaleznik (1965) on the executive role constellation; Levinson's (1964, 1968) work on the psychodynamic aspects of superior-subordinate relations; and Gabarro's (1978, 1979) research on the development of managerial working relationships. But relatively little research within organizational behavior has focused explicitly on the development of two-person relationships as such. Most of the research that has addressed the topic of working relationships has done so within the context of broader processes, such as managerial work, group behavior, or leadership.

This chapter presents a brief overview of the existing literature on working relationships and compares their characteristic development with that of other types of social relationships. It draws on two literatures relevant to the development of two-person working relationships. The first is the liter-

¹Mintzberg (1973, nn. 103-4), for example, cites studies conducted by Stieglitz (1969) on non-U.S. executives; Inkson et al. (1970) on English and U.S. executives; Stewart (1967) on British executives; and Dubin and Spray (1964) on U.S. executives.

ature on the broader topic of relationship formation, which has focused almost exclusively on social and intimate relationships rather than on task-based relationships. The second is the much smaller literature within organizational behavior that has dealt with aspects of task-based relationships. Viewing the topic from these two perspectives allows us to deal with the conundrum that although "relationships are relationships," as Weick (1969) has put it, task-based relationships are likely to differ from social relationships because they are subject to different situational and contextual forces (Wortman & Linsenmeier, 1977; Triandis, 1977).

Any interpersonal relationship involves both some degree of interaction between two people and some degree of continuity between successive interactions (Hinde, 1977; Swensen, 1973). The term *working relationship* is used here to mean an interpersonal relationship that is task-based, non-trivial, and of continuing duration. Working relationships like social relationships develop over time and can vary in their stability, mutuality, and efficacy (Gabarro, 1978). Although working relationships have not been studied as a substantive area of inquiry, the more general topic of relationship formation in social and intimate relations has been treated extensively. The topic occupies a significant place in the literatures on interpersonal attraction and two-person relationships. Accordingly this review will begin with these more general literatures.

Several conceptual and methodological problems are inherent in studying and describing interpersonal relationships of any kind. The most basic of these problems is that although they can be defined in terms of dyadic characteristics, such as shared meaning, content of interaction, "quality," patterning of behavior, and context (Hinde, 1979), relationships are themselves the consequence of interactions amongst individuals and are heavily permeated by the effects of individual personality and predispositions (Sullivan, 1953; Carson, 1969; Hodgson, Levinson, and Zaleznik, 1965). Moreover the processes involved in the evolution of a relationship are multifaceted (Huston, 1974) and involve different levels and types of behavior. Triandis (1977), for example, has differentiated among attributive, affective, and overt behaviors, while Huston (1974) has distinguished among evaluative, cognitive, and behavioral components. Altman and Taylor (1973) have described the relevant processes as consisting of internal subjective processes (including expectations, attribution processes, and evaluative judgments) and overt behaviors, which they define as including verbal and nonverbal behaviors and the use of objects and space. Altman has further argued that the process of relationship formation is sufficiently complex, in terms of the variables that influence it over time, that the phenomenon should be studied from a social-ecological point of view (Altman, 1974, 121-25).

A final question that arises in discussing relationship formation is what

distinguishes a "developed" relationship from a partially developed one. As Hinde (1979) has pointed out, even the distinction between "interaction" and "relationship" is by necessity somewhat arbitrary. The question is a particularly difficult one because most theoretical descriptions of the development of relationships include not only a temporal dimension but also hierarchical dimensions of mutuality and pair relatedness (Levinger, 1974) and commitment (Secord & Backman, 1964).

These problems are further compounded when we focus our attention on working relationships as a substantive category. All of the research and theory on the general topic of relationship formation strongly indicates that the situational and role-related factors that distinguish working relationships from social ones are likely to make a difference in their development.

This chapter obviously cannot examine in depth all of the processes and issues just described. It is possible, however, to address some of these questions one at a time, beginning with a discussion of the dimensions along which relationships develop as indicated by the general literature on social relationships. Then, after considering the stages that characterize relationship formation and the underlying social processes that drive it, we can turn to working relationships as a substantive category and explore the issues involved in their development in more detail.

DIMENSIONS ALONG WHICH RELATIONSHIPS DEVELOP

Although scholars differ in their definitions of a developed relationship, there is a remarkable degree of convergence in the literature on the dimensions that characterize the development of relationships. Several of these dimensions are summarized in Table 4.1, which draws heavily on the integrative review of Altman and Taylor (1973) and to a lesser degree on those of Levinger and Snoek (1972) and other authors referenced in Table 4.1. Let me briefly describe each of these dimensions as characteristics, while postponing my discussion of the underlying processes, such as social exchange, that move relationships along the various dimensions.

The first three dimensions listed in Table 4.1 are perhaps the most frequently cited as characteristics of mature, stabilized relationships: the *degree of self-disclosure* present in a relationship; the *degree and richness of knowledge that each party has of the other*; and the *ability of both parties to predict and anticipate each other's reactions and responses*. It is no accident that these three characteristics are interrelated. The higher the level of mutual self-disclosure in a relationship, the greater the knowledge base each

TABLE 4.1
Summary of Dyadic Dimensions Among which Relationships Develop

From	To
OPENNESS AND SELF-DISCLOSURE ^{1,2,3,4,6}	
Limited to "safe," socially acceptable topics	Disclosure goes beyond safe areas to include personally sensitive, private, and controversial topics and aspects of self
KNOWLEDGE OF EACH OTHER ^{2,4,5,6}	
Surface, "biographic" knowledge; impressionistic in nature	Knowledge is multifaceted and extends to core aspects of personality, needs, and style
PREDICTABILITY OF OTHER'S REACTIONS AND RESPONSES ^{2,4,5,6}	
Limited to socially expected or role-related responses, and those based on first impressions or repeated surface encounters	Predictability of other's reactions extends beyond stereotypical exchange and includes a knowledge of the contingencies affecting the other's reactions
UNIQUENESS OF INTERACTION ^{1,2,5}	
Exchanges are stereotypical, guided by prevailing social norms or role expectations	Exchanges are idiosyncratic to the two people, guided by norms that are unique to the relationship
MULTIMODALITY OF COMMUNICATION ^{1,2}	
Largely limited to verbal channels of communication and stereotypical or unintended nonverbal channels	Includes multiple modalities of communication, including nonverbal and verbal "shorthands" specific to the relationship or the individuals involved; less restrictiveness of nonverbal
SUBSTITUTABILITY OF COMMUNICATION ^{1,2}	
Little substitution among alternative modes of communication	Possession of and ability to use alternative modes of communication to convey the same message
CAPACITY FOR CONFLICT AND EVALUATION ^{1,2,3,5}	
Limited capacity for conflict; use of conflict-avoidance techniques; reluctance to criticize	Readiness and ability to express conflict and make positive or negative evaluations
SPONTANEITY OF EXCHANGE ^{1,2,3}	
Interactions tend to be formal or "comfortably informal" as prescribed by prevailing social norms	Greater informality and ease of interaction; movement across topical areas occurs readily and without hesitation or formality; communication flows and changes direction easily

(Continued)

TABLE 4.1
(continued)

From	To
SYNCHRONIZATION AND PACING ^{1,2}	
Except for stereotyped modes of response, limited dyadic synchrony occurs	Speech and nonverbal responses become synchronized; flow of interaction is smooth; cues are quickly and accurately interpreted
EFFICIENCY OF COMMUNICATION ^{1,2}	
Communication of intended meanings sometimes requires extensive discussion; misunderstandings occur unless statements are qualified or elaborated	Intended meanings are transmitted and understood rapidly, accurately, and with sensitivity to nuance
MUTUAL INVESTMENT ^{2,7}	
Little investment in the other except in areas of role-related or situation interdependencies	Extensive investment in other's well-being and efficacy

¹Altman and Taylor 1973, 129-36.²Levinger and Snoek 1972; Levinger 1974, 100-109.³Jourard 1971.⁴Hinde 1979, 133-134.⁵Swensen 1973, 105-6, 455, 230-37.⁶Triandis 1977, 191-93.⁷Second and Backman 1964.

person has of the other; the more extensive this knowledge base, the easier it is for each party to anticipate the other's responses and reactions correctly. Even without extensive self-disclosure, two people will get to know each other better (and therefore predict each other's reactions better) simply through the residual personal learning that results from the repeated interactions that occur in sustained relationships.

The next three dimensions noted in Table 4.1 are also manifestly related to how well both parties know each other and are to some degree a natural product of cumulative and sustained interaction. *Uniqueness of interaction* is the extent to which exchanges are idiosyncratic to a dyad and guided by norms unique to the relationship, as compared with the more stereotypical exchanges that occur in casual relationships, which tend to be guided by prevailing social norms (Altman & Taylor, 1973) or by role expectations (Kelvin, 1970). *Multimodality of communication* refers to the number of modalities of communication that are available and used by a dyad, including verbal and nonverbal shorthands specific to the relationship. The general finding has been that mature and stable relationships are characterized by greater multimodality than casual or less intense relationships. *Substitut-*

ability of communication concerns a dyad's ability to use alternate modes of communication to convey the same message. Such substitutability is a characteristic of mature, developed relationships, because it requires considerable mutual knowledge and experience to develop a shared repertoire of meanings and ways of expressing those meanings.

The next three dimensions listed in Table 4.1 can also be seen as parts of a related constellation. A dyad's *capacity for conflict and evaluation* refers to the readiness and ability of two people to express conflict and to make positive or negative evaluations of each other. Although this capacity requires more than the mere passage of time and sustained interaction, it is more likely to be found in developed relationships than in those involving surface encounters (Levinger, 1974), in which social norms prescribe the polite avoidance of conflict and criticism (Altman & Taylor, 1973). *Spontaneity of exchange* refers to the informality and ease of interaction characteristic of a relationship and the ability of a dyad to move across topical areas readily (Altman & Taylor, 1973; Levinger, 1974). This type of spontaneity seldom occurs between people whose relationship remains at a superficial level, because it assumes a high degree of shared meaning and interpersonal comfort. *Synchronization and pacing* refers to the degree to which verbal and nonverbal responses are coordinated, the smoothness of interaction, and the extent to which cues are quickly and accurately interpreted. All three of these characteristics presume a depth of familiarity and mutual knowledge that is seldom found in casual acquaintanceships, and it should not be surprising that they become more prevalent as a relationship grows in importance and experience.

Efficiency of communication refers to the degree to which intended meanings are transmitted and understood with rapidity, accuracy, and sensitivity to nuance. Again, it is not surprising that as a relationship develops, its efficiency of communication increases. Progress along this dimension is presumably closely related to progress along the other nine dimensions. For example, a high degree of substitutability and multimodality of communication cannot help but increase the efficiency with which two people can exchange meanings. Similarly the development of norms and shorthands unique to a relationship, a capacity for conflict, spontaneity, and synchronization all help two people communicate more quickly and accurately.

Finally, *mutual investment* refers to each party's interest in the other's well-being and efficacy. This dimension derives principally from the work of Levinger and Snoek (1972), who directly relate it to several of the other dimensions already discussed, as well as to underlying dynamics of social exchange.

Before proceeding further, it is useful to underscore several observations concerning the characteristics we have just reviewed. First, they are not pure dimensions, because they are closely interrelated and appear to emerge from

common underlying processes, such as social exchange, evaluation, and attribution, which have not yet been discussed. Second, these dimensions are progressive in nature and are treated as such in the literature (see Altman & Taylor, 1973). They are progressive even when the nature of the relationship is pathological, and increased movement along such dimensions as mutual investment and uniqueness and synchrony of interaction can result in destructive outcomes for one or both parties (Carson, 1969; Lidz et al., 1957; Lidz & Fleck, 1960). Third, as will be discussed later, progression along these dimensions is moderated by three general classes of factors, which Altman and Taylor (1973) term *individual factors*, *situational context*, and the *outcomes of the exchange* for each party.

Although the dimensions just described are based almost exclusively on research conducted on dyads of a social and intimate nature, they have face validity and relevance for task-based relationships, at least at a descriptive level. Everyday observation would suggest that individual working relationships differ from each other along these dimensions and progress along these dimensions as they develop. Moreover, barring underlying psychodynamics of a pathological nature, progression along these dimensions should enable the two parties to work better together, if only because of the increased efficacy of exchange that characterizes more developed relationships.

STAGES IN THE RELATIONSHIP-FORMATION PROCESS

Implicit in the dimensions just reviewed is progression not only of a qualitative nature but also of a temporal and cumulative nature as well. A number of authors have suggested that relationships typically progress through stages as they develop. Although Hinde (1971, 1979) has argued that such stages cannot be distinguished by observable discontinuities and that any definitions of stages are likely to depend on arbitrary criteria, he also suggests that it can be useful to describe changes in a relationship as involving a succession of stages (pp. 289-90). Stage paradigms of the relationship-formation process have been postulated by several researchers. Simmel (1950), for example, implied a progression through stages of casual acquaintanceships, friendships, reciprocated love, and established dyads; Newcomb (1961) postulated differences in stages in terms of balance theory; Kerckhoff and Davis (1962) described differences in terms of similarity and complementarity of attitudes; and Murstein (1977) postulated stages in terms of stimulus, value comparison, and role compatibility. This review, however, will focus only on the three stage paradigms that figure most prominently in the literature on relationship formation (see, for example, reviews in Hinde, 1979; Huston, 1974; Swensen, 1973; Triandis, 1977).

These three are Secord and Backman's (1964) reciprocal-exchange-stage paradigm, which is heavily based on Thibaut and Kelley's (1959) work; Levinger and Snoek's (1972) and Levinger's (1974) pair-relatedness model; and Altman and Taylor's (1973) social-penetration model. Table 4.2 describes these stage paradigms in terms of both the stages postulated and the underlying processes thought to move relationships through these stages.

TABLE 4.2
Major Stage Paradigms of the Relationship-Formation Process

I. <u>Reciprocal exchange paradigm</u> (Secord & Backman 1964; Thibaut & Kelley 1959)	
<i>Stages or levels of relationship</i>	<i>Underlying processes</i>
1. <i>Sampling</i> : Selection process by which a person chooses another with whom he will have a more involved relationship; requires propinquity; appearance, attractiveness, similarity are used to evaluate potential payoffs.	The "motor" for both the formation and termination of the relationship is each party's desire to <i>maximize personal outcomes</i> . Each person's comparison level (Thibaut and Kelley 1959) and comparison level of alternatives change over time with experience and learning, and therefore the evaluation of payoffs is evolutionary.
2. <i>Bargaining</i> : Each party tests and negotiates to see if "a more permanent trading relationship would be to mutual advantage." In a sense, this starts the moment two people begin to interact; rewards come from ease of interaction, similarity of values, and complementarity of needs.	
3. <i>Commitment</i> : Relationship becomes more central and, in social and romantic relationships, intimate. Each party forgoes relations with others to engage in relationship with the other party.	
4. <i>Institutionalization</i> : Formal ratification of the commitment takes place (if deep and appropriate). Legal, symbolic, or other ratification and mutual acknowledgment of the commitment occurs.	
II. <u>Mutuality and pair-relatedness paradigm</u> (Levinger & Snoek 1972; Levinger 1974)	
<i>Levels of relationship</i>	<i>Underlying processes</i>
1. <i>Unilateral Awareness</i> : (Level 1) Other is seen entirely in terms of external characteristics. Attraction based on perception of favorable and <i>potentially</i> rewarding attributes (expected favorable outcomes before	Dyads develop through stages of increasing <i>mutuality</i> of rewarding exchanges. Processes include
	1. <i>Mutual Disclosure</i> : Disclosure of selves and sharing of significant attitudes, feelings, and experiences re-

(Continued)

TABLE 4.2
(continued)

extended interaction occurs). Knowledge of each other is superficial.

2. *Bilateral Surface Contact*: (Level 2) Interactions primarily superficial and stereotyped; defined by socially determined roles. Relationships typically segmented in that they deal with partial aspects of living; attraction based on *actual* reward-cost outcomes and expected future outcomes. Variables are important at this stage, not necessarily so for later stages. Knowledge of each other is partial.

3. *Mutuality*: (Level 3) A continuing evolution toward greater shared meanings; attraction is based on the satisfactions of levels 1 and 2 and also on unique dyad emotional investments, interdependencies, and mutuality of need satisfactions. Partners possess shared knowledge of each other and assume responsibility for furthering each other's outcomes. Both parties share private norms for regulating their association. (Advanced level 3) The prior history of the pair's interactions serves to increase the "number of its actual and potential joint behavior repertoires."

III. Social-penetration paradigm (Altman & Taylor 1973)

Stages of social penetration

1. *Orientation*: Interactions are stereotyped in nature; exchanges lack breadth, depth, or richness. Information exchanged at superficial level. Little open evaluation, criticism, or expression of conflict; indirect techniques used for conflict avoidance. Interactions limited to outer, public areas of personality. "Social actors scan one another and communicate according to conventional formula."
2. *Exploratory affective exchange*: Interpersonal behavior is still at periphery of self. Relations flow more smoothly and are more relaxed.

sult in a "spiral of shared assumptions."

2. *Mutual Investment*: As a relationship unfolds, each party takes increasing pleasure in the other's satisfaction. Mutual investment includes learning how to accommodate each other's responses and preferences. The deeper the relationship, the larger the cargo of joint experiences, shared feelings, and behavior coordination.

Underlying processes

1. *Social penetration involves* (1) *overt interpersonal behaviors*, (2) *internal subjective processes* (including attribution, assessment) which precede, accompany, and follow overt exchange. Interactions are "critiqued" to see if further contact or penetration is worth pursuing.
2. Penetration is a systematic, orderly process of *mutual self-disclosure*, which proceeds gradually from superficial to deeper areas of personality.
3. The rate and stage of penetration varies as a function of interpersonal

TABLE 4.2
(Continued)

Commitments are limited or temporary.

3. *Full affective exchange*: Both parties know each other well; fairly extensive history of association; exchange more spontaneous; considerable interpersonal synchrony, permeability, and substitutability; readiness to make positive and negative evaluations; increased uniqueness in patterns of communication. Knowledge of intermediate levels of each other's self; many barriers to intimacy down, but exchange still retains restrictedness and caution.
4. *Stable exchange*: Achieved in only a few relationships. Exchanges involve richness, spontaneity. Parties know each other well and can readily interpret and predict feelings and probable behavior of other; considerable knowledge and dialogue involving core areas of personality.

rewards and costs (absolute magnitude and reward/cost ratio), both immediate and expected.

4. Depenetration is the reverse process and is also systematic.
5. The process is moderated by personal characteristics of the two people involved, outcomes of exchange, situational context.

The Reciprocal-Exchange Model

Secord and Backman (1964) postulated that social relationships can progress through four stages, which they called *sampling*, *bargaining*, *commitment*, and *institutionalization* (see Table 4.2). Their view of the underlying social processes that account for progress through these stages is based on social-exchange theory. A relationship's progress through these stages, they argue, will depend on each person's ability to maximize personal rewards in the relationship as compared with external alternatives. A relationship will develop if doing so increases personal outcomes, given each person's internal comparison level and comparison levels of alternatives (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). They further argue that each person's comparison levels will change over time and that the evaluation of payoffs is evolutionary in nature.

Mutuality and Pair-Relatedness

Levinger and Snoek (1972) see the potential evolution of relationships in terms of three levels of pair relatedness, which are in turn based on the degree of mutuality present in a relationship (see Table 4.2). Like that of

Secord and Backman, their model is based on social-exchange theory (Homans, 1950, 1961; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959) in that dyads are seen as developing through stages of increasingly rewarding mutual exchanges. However, Levinger and Snoek go well beyond the simple concept of rewards and costs and describe mutual self-disclosure (Jourard, 1959) and mutual investment in a common bond as important underlying processes that move a relationship through these stages. Thus their stage paradigm goes significantly beyond the social-exchange paradigms of Secord and Backman (1964) and Thibaut and Kelley (1959).

Social-Penetration Model

Perhaps the most inclusive, integrated, and detailed stage paradigm of the relationship-formation process has been presented by Altman and Taylor (1973) (see Table 4.2). They postulate four stages of social penetration, which involve increasing degrees of mutual knowledge, openness, uniqueness of exchange, spontaneity, synchrony, and substitutability. Although they emphasize that any attempt to categorize the social-penetration process into clearly delineated stages is artificial their four stages differ markedly in their central activities, exchanges, and characteristics. They see the social-penetration process as including both overt interpersonal behaviors and internal subjective processes (including attribution, assessment, and expectations), which take place before, during, and after exchanges. Interactions are "critiqued" over time to see if further penetration is worth pursuing.

Altman and Taylor define social penetration as a systematic and orderly process of mutual self-disclosure, which proceeds gradually from superficial to deeper areas of exchange involving more central aspects of each person's personality. In this respect, their view of the underlying dynamics is similar to Levinger and Snoek's. Similarly, they also view the rate and stage of social penetration as a function of interpersonal rewards and costs (in terms of absolute magnitude and reward/cost ratio), both immediate and expected.

Altman and Taylor's social penetration model is quite inclusive and extends to aspects of personality and self. Like Levinger and Snoek, they believe the development of a relationship is closely related to self-disclosure and the breadth and depth of each person's knowledge of the other. Critical to their conception of the social-penetration process, however, is the degree of access each person has to core aspects of the other's personality. They visualize both disclosure and access in terms of a "breadth" dimension (how many aspects of one's personality become known to the other), a "breadth-frequency" dimension, and a "depth" dimension (disclosure of central versus peripheral aspects of self). In these terms, the social-penetration process proceeds toward greater depth, breadth, and interconnectedness, resulting in greater vulnerability and access to "socially undesirable" characteristics as

well as greater understanding of the whole personality. A surface relationship would tend to be segmented (low breadth) and peripheral (low depth), while a more advanced relationship would be characterized by mutual disclosure and knowledge of a broader, deeper, and more interconnected nature.

Commonalities

These three stage models have several important underlying similarities. The first is that early stages largely involve interactions that are socially "safe" or stereotypical, concerning topics that are routine, superficial, or prescribed by role expectations. Commitment tends to be tentative; knowledge of the other is superficial and segmental; and the focus of each party's concerns tends to be principally unilateral rather than bilateral. In contrast, later stages are characterized by richer and more penetrating exchanges, more commitment to the other and to the relationship itself, and finally greater permanence and stability.

Underlying Processes

The three stage paradigms are all rooted in social-exchange theory in that movement from one stage to another is based on the prospect that greater social penetration, mutuality, or commitment will be, on balance, more rewarding. All three models also presume the presence of what Altman and Taylor have described as internal subjective processes, such as attribution, the development of expectations, assessment, and evaluation. Finally, several common overt processes are involved in moving from one stage to another. These include selective self-disclosure, exploration, testing, and negotiation.

In their shared view of the direction of movement and the underlying processes, the three stage models are readily applicable to the development of working relationships. It is not clear, however, that the *particular configurations* of the stages postulated by these authors are as applicable to working relationships as they are to social and intimate relationships. Let us now turn our attention to working relationships as a substantive category to explore these differences and their implications in more detail.

WORKING RELATIONSHIPS AS A SUBSTANTIVE TYPE

One should not draw too sharp a line between working relationships and social relationships. Working relationships are, after all, a form of social relationship; they employ social modalities, develop between two social beings, and exist in organizational contexts that are themselves social structures. For these reasons we will treat them as a substantive type of social

relationship. Nonetheless, it also seems clear that working relationships are not the same as purely social or intimate relationships. The stage paradigms reviewed in Table 4.2 do not apply easily to most working relationships, except as they pertain to their purely personal aspects. A key question thus is what characteristics of working relationships distinguish them from other types of social relationships.

Interpersonal Setting and Relationship Goals

An important factor affecting the development of any relationship is the behavioral setting itself (Barker, 1968; Wicker, 1972) and the expectations that people bring to it as an interpersonal setting (McCall, 1974). Interpersonal settings have been described in terms of a number of dimensions. These include such contextual cues as time, space, and objects (Athos & Gabarro, 1978) and place, imagery, and nonverbal clues (McCasky, 1978). Altman and Taylor (1973) have argued that the purpose of a relationship is itself a basic aspect of the interpersonal setting. They cite earlier work by Bennis et al. (1964) in which interpersonal settings are defined in terms of relationship goals, that is, the purposes inherent in why a given relationship is formed in the first place. Using this definition, Bennis et al. identified four different types of relationships that act as interpersonal settings: (1) relationships formed to fulfill themselves (such as love, friendship, and marriage); (2) those formed for self-confirmation or situational definition; (3) those formed to influence or bring about change; and (4) those formed to focus on task achievement. Although working relationships often meet two or more of these goals simultaneously, their primary purpose is usually the achievement of a task, and the wider setting is typically an organizational or task-based context. Because of their distinctive purpose and interpersonal setting, several factors are much more important in working relationships than in purely social ones. These factors include task and task instrumentality, the degree of affect, the role of competence, the nature of self-disclosure, and the importance of role.

Task and Task Achievement. One result of the centrality of the task dimension is that the social component of a working relationship is less important than it is in an intimate relationship (Triandis and Davis 1965; Goldstein and Davis 1972). In terms of underlying social-exchange dynamics, the principal rewards and costs concern task achievement. Similarly, although the affective component is important to all relationships, it is less so in task-based, formal relationships than in purely social ones (Triandis 1977). In part, this is because people seek out other interpersonal settings to attain other kinds of rewards (McCall 1974) and form working relationships principally to focus on task completion.

Task Instrumentality. When task attainment is the basis for a relationship, people can be expected to value attributes in the other that are consistent with task accomplishment (Wortman & Linsenmeier, 1977). Research by Wall and Adams (1974) and others shows clearly that in task-based dyads, a person's ability to perform effectively influences a number of interpersonal outcomes, including the other person's willingness to grant autonomy, the development of trust, and the other person's evaluation—all of which are important to the relationship-formation process. Similarly, other research has shown that successful task performance is a basis for both liking and attraction (Farris & Lim, 1969) and satisfaction and cohesion (Staw, 1975).

Conversely, some research on working relationships also suggests that some conventional sources of interpersonal attraction are less important in working relationships than they are in social or intimate relationships. In a three-year longitudinal study of the evolution of managerial relationships, Gabarro (1978) found that initial liking and attraction were not predictive of the longer-term strength of the relationship. Other more instrumentally relevant attributes, such as judgment, competence, and task consistency, were far more important to the development of a working relationship and its resulting quality, but these attributes did not emerge until after the two parties had worked together for some time. Gabarro also found that if a superior or subordinate was an effective working partner, managers would overlook social traits that they would have considered undesirable in a personal relationship (Gabarro, 1978, 290–92).

Elsewhere, I have referred to the task-based instrumentality found in managerial relationships as a “pragmatic imperative,” arguing that it shapes interactions profoundly but not always with the best outcomes (Gabarro 1980).² The pragmatic imperative influences how a relationship develops

²In using the expression *pragmatic imperative* I am calling attention to the desire of managers to focus on aspects of causality that are instrumentally relevant in achieving the ends they are most concerned with, i.e., creating effects that contribute to task attainment and personal and organizational performance. But in a more basic sense *all* relationships are pragmatic in that people see their situations and act upon them in ways that help them attain what they want or what they think is important (Lecky, 1945). Part of this pragmatism in everyday life is that people tend to perceive their situations in ways that simplify them so they can focus on what is *salient* to them, just as managers do in their own particular setting. The need for this selective simplification is a recurrent theme in virtually every school of psychology and social psychology, and the concept of the pragmatic imperative as a variable in human interaction is an old and pervasive one. Weick (1969, p. 67) explicitly describes the predominant orientation of the human actor as pragmatic and identifies this pragmatism as the essential determinant of what a person attends to and what meanings he makes of his experiencing. Thus, in using the term *pragmatic imperative*, I am only highlighting an essential aspect of all human interaction in managerially specific terms.

and what is valued in it. It has particular implications for competence and for the nature of self-disclosure in working relationships.

Competence. Task-specific competence plays a much greater role in the development of working relationships than it does in purely social ones. Considerable research suggests that competence has a direct effect on the development of both interpersonal trust and influence (see the review by Walton et al., 1968; Bachman, 1968; Wall & Adams, 1974; Gabarro, 1978, 1979; Schwarzwald & Goldenberg, 1979). Demonstrated competence has also been found to influence liking and interpersonal evaluation in working relationships (Lowin & Craig, 1968; Farris & Lim, 1969; Fromkin, Klimoski, & Flanagan, 1972) as well as how much a person is willing to invest in a relationship (Gabarro, 1978). Thus competence can be expected to be a very powerful personal attribute in the development of working relationships.

SELF-DISCLOSURE

In all three of the major stage paradigms reviewed earlier, self-disclosure, especially of a personal or intimate nature, figures prominently both as a characteristic of a relationship and as an underlying process involved in the development of relationships. The limited work that has been done on the role of self-disclosure in working relationships suggests that disclosure about self is less important than openness concerning task or organizational issues (Gabarro, 1978), but that openness concerning task-related issues is quite critical (Gaines, 1980; Sgro et al., 1980). Current research also suggests that interpersonal trust as related to openness is a two-factor variable comprising a person-specific, attitudinal factor, which is broad-based and stable, and a situation-specific factor, which is less stable and is situationally contingent (Archer, 1979; Scott, 1980). Indeed, Gabarro (1978) found examples of working relationships that were perceived by both parties as highly effective and satisfying but that involved very little disclosure of a personal or intimate nature. This should not be surprising, because working relationships are, in Altman and Taylor's (1973) terms, *segmental* in nature: they do not necessarily involve all aspects of a person's life. Disclosure of one's intimate thoughts and feelings is not as important to the development of a working relationship as openness about variables that directly influence the relationship. In fact, personal disclosures may have a negative effect if seen as inappropriate (Jones & Gordon, 1972; Derlega & Grzelak, 1979; Wortman et al., 1976) or poorly timed (Jones & Archer, 1976).

Role as a Factor

If task instrumentality is an important consequence of the purposive nature of working relationships, the presence of organizational roles is an equally important aspect of their interpersonal setting (Biddle & Thomas, 1966).

Roles and role expectations are part of the context of all social interaction, but they are even more pervasive and are more explicitly defined in working relationships, particularly when they occur within or across organizational hierarchies. Most working relationships develop between people by virtue of their roles. In this respect, people begin with an institutionalized role relationship, often before they have begun to develop an actual working relationship. For example, superiors and subordinates begin their interactions with a "ratified role relationship," which is the final stage in the Second and Backman paradigm of relationship development (see Table 4.2). In a perverse way, they are at stage 4 before they have begun the activities that Second and Backman describe as occurring in earlier stages. The operational question for such a dyad is not whether to get "married," but rather how to make the marriage work (Gabarro & Kotter, 1980).

A second consequence of roles in hierarchical organizations is that the distribution of power in working relationships tends to be far clearer and more asymmetric than in relationships of a purely social and voluntary nature. Asymmetry in power has a negative effect on self-disclosure and the development of trust (Walton et al., 1968; Walton, 1969) unless such self-disclosure is legitimized by role-related social norms, such as those pertaining to relationships with psychiatrists, physicians, social workers, and priests (Derlega & Grzelak, 1979). Thus working relationships are likely to develop in a more guarded and monitored fashion than those described in the general literature on relationship formation. On the other hand, work by Tedeschi (1974) and others suggests that asymmetry in power can sometimes be a basis of attraction if a foundation of trust or credibility exists.

A final and rather direct way in which role definitions can affect the development of working relationships is that people's reactions to each other and the attributions they make about each other are clearly influenced by role expectations (Davis, 1973; Guiot, 1977; Triandis, 1977). Guiot has argued convincingly that attributions about intention and behavior are made quite differently if one is viewed "in role" rather than "*qua persona*," and that behavior that leads to the attribution of sincerity or trustworthiness "*qua persona*" will not lead to the same attribution if a person is seen "in role." Guiot further argues that because of this distinction many findings in the attribution literature are not applicable to role-based situations.

Salient Differences

As the preceding discussion makes clear, working relationships differ from more purely social relationships in a number of ways that are likely to influence their development. First, they are more *segmental* in nature than intimate or personal relationships. Both the mutuality of exchange and the breadth of that mutuality can be expected to be narrower and less inclusive

than in personal relationships; relationship development is more likely to involve depth of mutual understanding concerning task-related issues rather than breadth along a fuller range of issues. Second, *openness* concerning task-salient issues can be expected to be more important than self-disclosure per se. Third, specific *competencies* that are task relevant will be an important influence on attributions, liking, and evaluation. Finally, *role definitions* can be expected to temper openness, trust, and self-disclosure as a working relationship progresses and, all other things being equal, retard the degree of social penetration that is likely to occur (Altman & Taylor, 1973).

THE DEVELOPMENT OF WORKING RELATIONSHIPS

With these differences in mind, let us now turn our attention to the question of how working relationships develop. Although the particular configurations and content of the stages summarized in Table 4.2 do not fit working relationships easily, the underlying processes and directionality of these paradigms do have applicability if we consider the differences just reviewed as moderating variables. For example, working relationships clearly evolve toward the greater shared meanings of Levinger and Snoek's pair-relatedness model, though this development may not occur along all of the dimensions described in Table 4.2. The underlying process of self-disclosure is also applicable if we consider self-disclosure in terms of task-relevant openness. The related notion of a "growing spiral" of shared assumptions also applies if we construe it in terms of assumptions salient to task. Similarly the process of mutual investment has manifest applicability in terms of mutual accommodation and investment in common goals, if not along the other dimensions shown in the figure. The same argument can be made about the directionality of Altman and Taylor's stages of orientation, exploration, and stabilized exchange, if one views progression as occurring segmentally in terms of depth.

We can expect therefore that working relationships that develop beyond role-specified surface encounters will progress along the dimensions summarized in Table 4.1 and with the directionality of movement indicated in Table 4.2. Thus for a working relationship to develop effectively, we can expect that mutual understanding and richness of knowledge will increase, and that the nature of this mutual knowledge will move from being general and impressionistic to specific and concrete. The underlying processes of expectation formation, attribution, assessment, and evaluation will operate in the development of working relationships just as they do on other types of relationships. Finally, we can expect that task-relevant openness will play a role analogous to that of self-disclosure in intimate relationships, and depth of mutual investment will not occur unless doing so is on balance more rewarding (or less costly) than not doing so.

Although little field-based research has been done on the actual development of working relationships, there is some evidence suggesting that the development of mutual expectations is an important factor influencing both the effectiveness of working relationships (Liden & Graen, 1980; Baird & Wieting, 1979) and how satisfying they are (Klimoski & Hayes, 1980; Valenzi & Dessler, 1978). These findings are similar to those reported in the leadership literature suggesting that the structuring of expectations is the single pattern that contributes positively to productivity and satisfaction (Stogdill, 1974).

The findings of the longitudinal study cited earlier are consistent with these findings. In a three-year study of the evolution of managerial relationships, Gabarro (1978, 1979) found that over time, expectations about performance, goals, and each party's role became not only more mutual but more concrete and specific as well. Interestingly, the exceptions to this pattern were either relationships that involved relatively little interdependence or ones in which one or both parties were dissatisfied with the relationship once it became stabilized. In the latter cases, Gabarro concluded that these were relationships in which insufficient openness, testing, or exploration had occurred.

The findings of this study also suggested, however, that individual relationships varied greatly in the rate at which mutuality and concreteness of expectations developed. Because of the small sample (thirty-three president/vice-president dyads in four sites) it was not possible to identify why this variation occurred. One can, however, postulate a number of reasons why some relationships develop more quickly or with greater depth than others, including differences in personal style, variations in interdependency, the relative performance of the subordinate's unit (e.g., poor performance would create greater interaction and scrutiny), and proximity (a subordinate located five hundred miles away is not likely to interact as often with his or her superior as one on the same floor).

Just as mutual expectations tended to become more specific over time, Gabarro also found attributions about such interpersonal variables as trust and influence became more differentiated with continued interaction. In early stages, attributions of the other's trustworthiness were typically general and impressionistic, while at later stages they were quite differentiated and specific, for example, "His sense of the market is excellent but he's consistently too optimistic [on sales forecasts]" (Gabarro, 1979, p. 12). On the basis of cross-time interview comparisons, Gabarro identified several dimensions along which attributions of trust were differentiated; these fell into two broad groups: character-based sources of trust (trust in the other's integrity, motives and intentions, consistency of behavior, openness and discreteness) and competence-based sources of trust (trust in the other's functional or specific competence, interpersonal competence, and "general business judgment") (Gabarro, 1978, pp. 295-98). Also identified were

several dimensions along which attributions of influence were differentiated in terms of both positional and personal bases.

In comparing the evolution of these relationships over the three years of the study, Gabarro postulated a four-stage model of the development of working relationships: (1) orientation and impression formation; (2) exploration; (3) testing and working through; and (4) stabilization. Table 4.3

TABLE 4.3
Stages in the Development of New Working Relationships:
Characteristics, Tasks, and Issues

Stage	Characteristics	Major Tasks	Issues and Questions
I. Orientation: Impression formation	Brief period, perhaps lasting the first several weeks. Mutual sizing up beginning with first impressions, and continuing with more extended and less stereotyped interactions. Trust is impressionistic and undifferentiated. Personal influence not yet developed.	Deal with the question of the other's motives. Exchange an initial set of expectations at a general level concerning objectives, roles, and needs. Develop initial understanding of how both parties will work together in the future.	How competent, reliable, and open is the other person? What are the other's concerns, motives, and intentions? How open and forthright to be with the other person?
II. Exploration: Beyond impressions	Longer period than Stage I, perhaps lasting the first several months. General and tentative expectations of Stage I become more specific and concrete. Rapid learning to search out the other's important assumptions and expectations, and to communicate one's own. Both parties begin to assert their personal identities, styles, and values.	Explore in more detailed and concrete terms other's expectations about goals, roles, and priorities. Surface and clarify differences in expectations. Explore and identify questions and sources concerning trust in terms of motives, competence, consistency, and openness. Explore and identify questions and	How much can the other person be trusted in terms of integrity, motives, competence, judgment, and consistency of action? How safe is it to be open with the other person in terms of problems or differences of opinion? What is the other person's credibility and decisiveness?

TABLE 4.3
(Continued)

Stage	Characteristics	Major Tasks	Issues and Questions
	Leads to confirmation or rejection of initial impressions.	sources concerning influence in terms of positional and personal attributes.	
III. Testing: Testing and defining the interpersonal contract	A long period, perhaps six months to a year in duration, but could be longer. Testing concerning minimal expectations, areas in which trust exists, and limits of each person's influence on the other are tacitly and overtly tested. As a result, limits of the evolving interpersonal contract are defined for better or for worse.	Test the mutuality of expectations, and the bases and limits of trust and influence. Work through and negotiate basic unresolved differences. Assess the degree to which mutual accommodation is possible, and whether the costs of achieving it are acceptable. Define stabilized set of expectations concerning each other's role, and the bases for trust and influence in the relationship.	To what extent is the situation (e.g., environment, structure, culture) rather than the other person the cause of the difficulties in the relationship? How long should the testing continue? How to know when enough is enough? How to insure an adequate testing to avoid a superficial and unsatisfactory relationship, without pressing too hard and risking unnecessary or unproductive confrontation?
IV. Stabilization	Interpersonal contract becomes defined Little further effort goes into learning about or testing each other. Aspects of the relationship such as expectations, trust, and influence undergo lit-	If events or episodes lead to negative feelings (e.g., conflict over a decision, slight, or oversight), take steps to repair the damage. Insure that the relationship continues to be productive, adaptive, and satis-	Is the interpersonal contract appropriate given changes in the individuals or the situation? How to keep the interpersonal contract viable in the face of major individual and situational changes?

(continued)

TABLE 4.3
(Continued)

Stage	Characteristics	Major Tasks	Issues and Questions
	the additional changes. Major event or change needed to destabilize the relationship.	<p>ifying as the needs of the situation and the parties change.</p> <p>If a major episode (e.g., one party's actions violate the level of trust built up) or a significant environmental change destabilizes the relationship, rework the earlier stages of the relationship-building process from the point of regressions.</p>	

Reprinted from V. Sathe, *Culture and Related Corporate Realities* (Homewood, Ill.: Irwin, 1985), by permission.

presents Sathe's (1985) overview of these stages, which summarizes the interpersonal tasks, issues, and dilemmas characteristic of each stage. The model is quite similar in many respects to those presented by Altman and Taylor and by Secord and Backman. The important difference is that the stages presented in Table 4.3 are described in terms of archetype issues that emerge with continued interaction rather than in terms of the "goodness" of a relationship. Gabarro postulated that management dyads progress through these stages regardless of the quality of their relationships, unless one party quits or is fired before the relationship becomes stabilized. For this reason, some working relationships that reached the stabilization stage were seen by one or both parties as not fully effective or satisfying (Gabarro, 1979, pp. 9-17).

Using a "contract" metaphor (Lawless, 1972; Levinson, 1968; Thomas, 1976), Gabarro postulated that managers go through these stages in the process of forming a unique interpersonal contract. He also argued, however, that a relationship's effectiveness is not determined by whether a dyad progresses through these stages, but rather by how well the dyad deals with the archetypal problems and dilemmas presented by each stage. Thus, unlike the stage paradigms reviewed earlier, Gabarro's stages are defined simply by the interpersonal tasks and issues that emerge with sustained

interaction. It should be clear, however, that working relationships could also be configured in terms of stages defined along hierarchical dimensions of mutuality or other qualitative aspects of relationships, which would be more directly analogous to the stage paradigms of Altman and Taylor and Levinger and Snoek.

Despite these differences, the general directionality of Gabarro's stages is essentially the same as that described in the Secord and Backman and Altman and Taylor stage paradigms. Moreover, the content and process issues described as characterizing each of the stages in Table 4.3 require the same types of exploration, openness, and reward/cost assessments as those described by Altman and Taylor and Levinger and Snoek, as well as the implicit testing and negotiating described by Secord and Backman. Indeed Table 4.3 implies that these interpersonal processes must occur if a working relationship is to develop effectively. Otherwise the relationship will stabilize at a relatively superficial level.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF MUTUAL EXPECTATIONS

Working relationships vary in their mutuality, efficacy, and intensity. Some stabilize at a relatively superficial level of exchange, others at rather deep levels of mutuality and synchrony. For purposes of this discussion, the development of working relationships has been seen as a progression from role-specified surface encounters to a greater degree of mutual exchange and task-related efficacy. The process involves both temporal dimensions (such as the sequential phases shown in Table 4.3) and qualitative dimensions (such as those summarized in Table 4.1). An implicit assumption has been that when the work of two people makes them highly dependent on each other, it is desirable to develop a relationship that is mutual and robust enough to be rewarding and effective.

How can this process be facilitated? Several implications can be drawn from the work we have just reviewed. The first is that developing a robust working relationship takes time. The internal subjective processes of attribution, expectation formation, and assessment, described earlier as underlying the relationship formation process, all occur over time, are interactive, and typically involve extended sequences of interactions (Altman, 1974). To accelerate or influence the process (i.e., actually "develop" a working relationship rather than let it evolve) will require purposive "interpersonal work." Identifying and dealing with important differences of opinion, for example, requires emotional energy and action, as well as a level of awareness, of self and other, that does not occur naturally for most people.

A second implication is that the development of mutual expectations plays a key role in this process. In terms of task instrumentality and effectiveness, the relevant areas of mutuality in expectations concern (1) expectations about what the task is and what the outcomes of the joint endeavor

should be; (2) expectations about how the two parties should actually work with each other (which include assumptions about process as well as responsibility); and (3) expectations about how the two people work singly and independently on the joint task. Thus the task-salient aspects of mutuality include not only expectations about outcomes but also about interpersonal processes involving interdependence, autonomy, and individual influence, which are in turn affected by each person's assumptions about trust and power within a relationship (Argyris, 1962; Barnes, 1981; Deutsch, 1962; Jacobson, 1972).

Both the general literature on relationship formation and the field-based research reviewed earlier suggest that the development of mutual expectations requires a great deal of exploration, testing, and negotiation of individual expectations. These processes occur at both tacit and overt levels of behavior. It also requires considerable internal subjective work by each party, involving attributional processes, the formation and revision of individual expectations, and evaluative processes of the type described by social exchange theorists. To work actively toward developing shared expectations therefore requires a clear communication of initial expectations, where possible, and the exploration and testing of any difference in expectations. Exploration is also required when it is not clear to one or both parties what should be done or how to proceed (as is often the case at the outset of a joint endeavor). Finally either tacit or overt negotiation of differences is required before mutual expectations can be formed.

Although mutual expectations are sometimes negotiated or clarified as a result of critical and occasionally dramatic events, they are more typically worked out over time during a succession of routine interactions, such as *ad hoc* encounters, meetings, progress reviews, and discussions of task-based problems (Gabarro, 1978). Thus much of the work of developing mutual expectations will appear to be routine, invisible, or tacit, except where differences in initial expectations are clear.

The difficulty involved in clarifying, exploring, testing, and negotiating expectations will depend on the *a priori* differences between the two people involved. In this respect, working relationships are no different from purely social relationships, in which similarities in values and attitudes affect the ease with which further mutuality can develop (Berscheid & Walster, 1969). Considerable evidence suggests that the more similar two people are in background and attitudes, the easier and more satisfying a task-based relationship will become (Wexley et al., 1980; Ross & Ferris, 1981; Posner & Munson, 1979; Weiss, 1978). The literature on organization theory also suggests that differences in functional backgrounds result in different cognitive orientations concerning task achievement and different attitudes toward structuring, which are themselves natural sources of conflict (Lawrence & Lorsch, 1967; Lorsch & Allen, 1973). Thus we can expect

that differences in social attitudes and values as well as functionally based task predispositions will influence the amount of interpersonal work needed to develop an effective working relationship. This will be especially true in early stages, when initial expectations are "traded" and explored, and in later stages when mutual expectations are tested and negotiated.

Most of the research on working relationships (as well as much of the work done on the dynamics of task-based groups) suggests that openness in the confrontation of differences can make the outcomes of these processes more effective. The dilemma, of course, is that although openness tends to be reciprocated (Chaikin & Derlega, 1974), some threshold amount of interpersonal trust is needed before it seems safe to be open with another person (Rubin, 1975), especially where differences involve emotionally charged issues. No doubt this is why people "test" apparent differences incrementally and why modeling of openness by one or both parties is seen by many scholars of two-person relationships as a major explanation of why two people become more open over time (Bandura, 1977). In working relationships, it seems clear that the superior or the higher-status member of the dyad is in the safer position to model such behavior (Gabarro, 1979; Levinson, 1968).

The process of developing mutual expectations is further complicated by the reality that often one or both parties do not know what they want at the outset of a working relationship. One's expectations often do not become clear until after one has had some experience working with another person. In this respect, most differentiated expectations result from a process that Weick (1979) has called "retrospective sense-making" involving the "reflective glance." Much of the work of developing mutual expectations is therefore episodic and iterative. Even if early agreement on initial expectations is easily attained, subsequent renegotiation is needed as relationships develop. Several large U.S. corporations, such as General Electric and Exxon, have used "assimilation meetings" to facilitate the clarification and negotiation of mutual expectations between newly assigned managers and their new subordinates. These meetings have been very effective in clarifying initial expectations, developing a basis of trust, and accelerating the process by which initial mutual expectations are agreed upon. Experience with these interventions suggests, however, that subsequent meetings are needed after six to eight months to deal with issues that neither party could anticipate at the outset.

The development of mutual expectations is an extended process. Concrete differentiation of these expectations takes time and requires interpersonal work. As for the development of influence and trust, one-time interventions are insufficient (Scott, 1980). The research reviewed in this chapter, however, suggests that greater attention on the part of one or both parties can greatly influence the success and effectiveness of this process, and that

certain interventions of the type just described can help focus and accelerate the process. My own belief is that they also legitimize the confrontation and resolution of differences early in the relationship-formation process, thereby making it easier and safer for both parties to be open with each other as the relationship develops.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The development of working relationships is a vital aspect of organizational life. Nevertheless, although a large number of scholars trained in social psychology have recently entered the field of organizational behavior, it remains a neglected area of inquiry.

The thinness of existing research applicable to understanding how working relationships develop has at least three implications for further work. The first is that more research is needed on the development of working relationships as a substantive area of knowledge. The second is that more field-based work is needed so that working relationships can be studied in context. The third is that more work of a longitudinal nature is needed because the development of working relationships is an evolutionary social phenomenon.

Substantive Area of Inquiry

Research on phenomenal causality of behavior within two-person relationships is a strong tradition within social psychology, dating back to the early 1930s. This tradition has included work on interpersonal perception as well as phenomenal causality, and has yielded several major theories, including balance theory, other consistency theories, exchange theories, and, most recently, attribution theory. Yet for our purposes, this impressive body of knowledge has two significant limitations. First, although these theories are potent in their general explanatory power, they are of less value in predicting behavior and outcomes in *specific types of relationships*. This is not because they are poorly constructed theories. Rather, it is because they are so general that they cannot be usefully applied unless one first understands the situational context and purpose of a relationship. As Levinger (1974, p. 117) has pointed out in a critique of exchange and reinforcement theories, the strengths of these theories are simultaneously their weaknesses: "that which explains everything explains nothing; the 'laws' of [such theories] must be moved toward greater specificity and their elements differentiated." What is salient in a relationship obviously depends in part on its nature and context (From 1957; Tagiuri, 1969; Jones & Thibaut, 1958). Situational forces are sufficiently complex and variable in and of themselves that one cannot understand what is important to two people in a relationship without understanding the context and how it

impinges on the people involved (Kerckhoff, 1974). For example, attribution theory is clearly germane to the question of how two managers make attributions about each other in forming working relationships. But it is not very useful in understanding how working relationships develop unless one understands what traits, dispositions, behaviors, and contextual entities are salient to managers in their working relationships.

Indeed, several theories emerging from the literature on phenomenal causality—most notably attribution theory, cognitive-dissonance theory, and exchange theory—have been taught for some time in most graduate business schools and are included in most current textbooks on organizational behavior. Yet practicing managers seldom use these concepts to inform their decisions. I suspect that one reason for this disjunction between theory and practice is the lack of situationally grounded substantive theory. The importance of this gap between general and substantive theory has been pointed out by Wortman and Linsenmeier (1977) in their review of research on interpersonal attraction and ingratiation and its applicability to organizational settings. They note that the importance of competence and power in working relationships significantly affects the extent to which existing theory and findings are useful in predicting outcomes, and they conclude that considerably more research is needed on the particular "vicissitudes of the phenomena in organizational settings" before existing research on interpersonal attraction and ingratiation can be applied to the substantive issues and problems of organizational and managerial behavior (p. 173).

Clearly, certain basic underlying dynamics of relationships transcend situational settings. But the manifestation of these dynamics and the particular contextual factors that affect them vary from setting to setting. Further work of an integrative and substantive nature is needed to learn how these processes take place between people within organizations.

Field-Based Longitudinal Research

As we attempt to learn more about the development of working relationships, there is a great need for field-based, longitudinal research. Very little research so far has focused on how "natural," working relationships evolve over time. By natural relationships, I mean real, ongoing relationships as they exist in everyday life. Most research on relationship formation has involved "synthetic" relationships created for purposes of laboratory experimentation.³ Such synthetic relationships are by their very nature

³See, for example, Swensen's (1973) review of various approaches to the study of interpersonal relations and the data and methods employed within these approaches (pp. 144–47). There are, of course, some exceptions to this generalization, especially in regard to social exchange theory (pp. 245–56).

carefully constrained, controlled, and short-lived (as brief as thirty minutes; typically no longer than a couple of hours). Usually the person with whom the subject interacts in the relationship is a confederate of the experimenter, so that even if the subject's reactions are "natural" those of the confederate are not.

Obviously laboratory experimentation has many advantages, the principal one being that it enables the researcher to focus on specific variables under controlled conditions. Most of the advances in attribution theory and interpersonal attraction have been based on such work. But the results of laboratory research have only limited applicability to our understanding of the dynamics of developing relationships. Natural relationships are ongoing and evolutionary in nature, and people's interactions are less constrained than in a laboratory setting. In real relationships people are free to seek additional information, and, more important, they are able to "proact" on each other over time. As Weick (1979) and others have pointed out, people learn from their actions and the consequences of their actions and make cause-effect attributions in terms of past history (Jones & Goethals, 1972). Laboratory subjects are really objects, in the literal sense of the word, because they are one of the variables being manipulated and their ability to proact is severely constrained. In real relationships people are both subjects and objects. They can seek more information, act, and learn from their actions, and they do this over time (Bugental, 1969, 1978). To my knowledge, little empirical research within organizational behavior has focused on the development of natural working relationships and on how attributions change or develop over time as two people work together.

A related limitation of much of the work on relationship formation in general is that it is largely devoted to the verification and development of general theory (or what Glaser & Strauss [1967] and others have called formal theory). Thus, although some of it has dealt with specific aspects of behavior, the resulting findings are still at a very general level of abstraction and thus of limited utility in substantive areas such as working relationships. Unfortunately, this is particularly true of research on attribution, which is a central aspect of the relationship-formation process.

In stressing the need for more field-based longitudinal research and for more substantive theory, I do not wish to reinforce further the polarity that currently exists between field-based, middle-range theory and laboratory-based general theory. Clearly, further substantive research on the topic needs to be informed by existing formal theory, and conversely the development of more grounded, substantive theory cannot help but inform and articulate the larger base of general theory.

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Mutual Knowledge and Communicative Effectiveness

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Abstract

For people to communicate effectively, they must solve the mutual knowledge problem. That is, they must develop some idea of what their communication partners know and don't know in order to formulate what they have to say to them. Speakers come to conclusions about their partners' states of knowledge through a number of mechanisms—by listening to what they themselves have just said, by making inferences about the partners' state of knowledge from their category membership, or by relying on direct and backchannel feedback from their partners. This chapter describes experimental research illustrating these proposition and draws implications from this research for communication technology to support cooperative work.

It is hardly more than a platitude to observe that all cooperative work is mediated by some form of communication, but, platitude or not, there are few situations in which people can work cooperatively without a means of coordinating their efforts. Coordination of effort requires that information be exchanged among the cooperating individuals, and the exchange or transfer of information makes up a large part of what we mean by communication. The explosion in the development of communications technology that has occurred over the last quarter century or so has raised questions about (a) the kinds of information that must be communicated in order that different sorts of work can be accomplished, and (b) the communication modalities that can more or less efficiently transmit these different sorts of information.