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UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA

GRADUATE COLLEGE

COMMUNICATION SKILLS TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT: WHAT IS THE STATE OF THE ART?

A Dissertation

SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE FACULTY

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

By

NINA BARBEE
Norman, Oklahoma
2001

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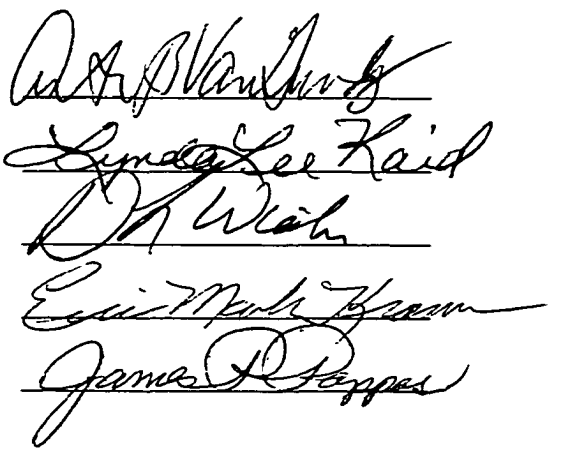
COMMUNICATION SKILLS TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT:
WHAT IS THE STATE OF THE ART?

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION

BY



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ABSTRACT

Communication Skills Training and Development: What is the State of the Art?

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Chair of Advisory Committee: Dr. Arthur B. VanGundy

This exploratory/descriptive study investigates communication skills training provided by companies between 1998 and 2000 and perceptions of human resource practitioners (managers and trainers) as to the importance of specific communication training items. A communication-specific questionnaire, partially based on frameworks used by the American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) Industry Reports (1996-1999), Bureau of Labor Statistics Reports (BLS), and Human Performance Practices Surveys (HPPS) was developed. Fifteen communication training items were identified in terms of training provided (yes/no) and then rated on a Likert scale (1 = "not at all important" to 5 = "extremely important"). Populations targeted were the Fortune 500, Society of Human Resource Managers (SHRM), and companies voted "100 best to work for" (Fortune, 1999, Jan., p. 119). Mixed mode data collection consisted of postal mail, e-mail, and telephone surveys. The results showed that more than 50% of the total training provided by respondents is considered communication training. Significant differences were detected (.05 level) among the 15 items in amount and type of training provided and also on the importance criterion (mean score ratings). Significant differences were reported for gender on the items verbal and nonverbal communication, and for the collapsed categories interpersonal/group skills Qualitative data (categories/themes), volunteered by respondents, indicated communication training used in practice and not listed on the communication questionnaire. Follow-up studies are recommended.

CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

> *Communication skills are the nuts and bolts of everything. For success in hard skills, we must educate people in soft skills.*
>
> (Robert Gedaliah, New York-based consultant responding on improving communication skills, as cited in McNerney, 1994).

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the state of communication skills training as reported by human resource practitioners, i.e., human resource managers and trainers. The study attempts to identify, define, and describe current practices in communication skills training and establish levels of importance as reported by individuals actively engaged in practice.

Researchers largely agree that effective communication skills are vital to sound organizational health. For example, Downs, Clampitt, and Pfeiffer (1988) report that one direction for organizational research concerns the use of communication to accomplish particular purposes including: "instruction, information, persuasion, integration, and innovation" (as cited in Frey, Botan, Friedman, & Kreps, 1991, p. 64). The authors go on to add that "more specific purposes include increasing productivity, establishing effective superior-subordinate links, and promoting job satisfaction" (p. 64).

However, little information is available concerning the specific types of communication skills training provided and especially which communication skills are perceived to be important by human resource practitioners. In an article by Donald J. McNerney, the American Management Association reportedly alleged that "some people

deride communication skills as 'soft skills,' implying that they are touchy-feely indulgences, less critical to business success than 'hard' technical skills" (McNerney, 1994, p. 1). In contrast, "Lee Iacocca, former Chrysler chairman, knew the importance of communication skills and showed that by sending every Chrysler employee to communication classes" (McNerney, 1994, p. 1). The point made in the article is that his strategy apparently worked.

McNerney (1994) offers his personal anecdote for improving communication stating that "it is only through effective communication that everyone in the organization can be directed toward the same goals [and that the] three basic communication skills that should be constantly honed are listening, speaking, and writing" (McNerney, p. 1). It is in light of these views, among others, that two questions are addressed by this study:

RQ1: What constitutes communication training and development in organizations?

RQ2: What communication skills are considered important by human resource practitioners (managers and trainers) in organizations?

The design of the study consists of three parts. The first, item analysis, examines past and present research laterally (borrowing from several disciplines) in an attempt to extract from those sources the categories and definitions of communication skills training and its place in the context of organizational training.

Second, the study investigates which types of communication training, if any, have been provided in the past two years (1998-2000) and which communication skills are

perceived to be the most important by human resource managers and trainers. Importance is understood in the context of general organizational health. This includes benefits to individual employees as well as bottom-line issues pertinent to organizational success or effectiveness, i.e., return on investment (ROI), productivity, profitability, and effectiveness.

Haney (1986) contends that communication greatly impacts organizational systems. But, especially today, "the need for communication skills is increasing" (cited in Axley, 1996, p. 17). "Communication has bottom line implications for managers and for organizations. . . . Top executives estimate that miscommunication costs their organizations from 25% to 40% of budget annually" (Haney, 1986, p. 6, as cited in Axley, 1996, p. 17). Further, Axley comments on the extensive review of research conducted by Downs, Clampitt, and Pfeiffer (1988) documenting the "links between organizational communication practices and such important outcomes as productivity and job satisfaction . . . communication clearly affects productivity and job satisfaction" (Axley, p. 17).

The third stage of this investigation will attempt to find out from human resource practitioners what percentage of the total amount of training provided by them is perceived to be communication training. Of equal importance to the study, is the provision of open-ended questions wherein practitioners may volunteer communication training items provided by them and not included as survey questionnaire items.

To this end, a survey instrument was developed based on an examination and analysis of the literature in the areas of education, training and development, human resource management, and communication. Communication training items were analyzed

from existing research bases and prior studies. The instrument was exploratory in nature and is intended to provide discovery as well as descriptive data. The research methodology consists of quantitative and qualitative data with standard demographic information given voluntarily by respondents.

Demographic information about human resource managers and trainers could prove to be informative since previous studies (e.g., ASTD Industry Reports) do not include that information. For the most part, business entities generally do not obtain that type of information as evidenced in trade journals. Therefore, the questionnaire seeks to retrieve age, sex, educational level, and race information from respondents voluntarily, with placement at the end of the survey, in a nonthreatening position.

Taking this into consideration, the last section of the literature review focuses on gender and four communication training items (of the 15 developed). These items include: leadership, listening, verbal communication, and nonverbal communication. These four areas receive sufficient support in the literature cited to pose the following research question:

> RQ3: Are there significant differences between females and males with respect to leadership, listening, verbal communication, and nonverbal communication in terms of amount of training provided and perceptions of importance?

Due to paucity of the research, four null hypotheses were developed from this line of questioning and the literature review.

H_{O1}: There are no significant differences between female and male practitioners in relation to leadership training provided and perceived to be important;

H_{O2}: There are no significant differences between female and male practitioners in relation to listening training provided and perceived to be important;

H_{O3}: There are no significant differences between female and male practitioners in relation to verbal communication training provided and perceived to be important;

H_{O4}: There are no significant differences between female and male practitioners in relation to nonverbal communication training provided and perceived to be important.

This study should provide useful information in two ways. First, exhaustive analysis of the literature and the collection of data will be used to expand the knowledge base and contribute current research to the fields of communication, education, human resource management, and other related disciplines. Second, the synthesis and analysis of literature and data should provide knowledge for practitioners to apply.

An attempt has been made to obtain a snapshot view of what is being practiced and then to discern common themes, congruence of terms, clarity in defining communication training practices, and ratings in terms of importance for communication skill items. The outcome should contribute to the present void in communication-specific training research and the lack of congruence in the terminology, definitions, and description in an area that is dynamic, complex, and multi-disciplinary in nature.

The context for the study, communication-specific training, lends itself, by nature, to a plethora of definitional issues. "Defining the term 'communication' is like trying to define the purpose of life itself--there are an enormous number of interpretations and

points of view" (Frey, Botan, Friedman, & Kreps, 1991, p. 72). As far back as 1976, Dance and Larson identified 126 definitions for the term in a survey of the literature (as cited in Frey, et al., p. 27). It is therefore no small task to reach some level of consensus or agreement on the composition of important communication skills training items. Consensus, however, is not the goal of this study.

More importantly, and much more feasibly, the intent of the study is to more clearly identify communication training and communication skill development that occurs and is deemed important. This is an initial step to narrowing the vast profusion of terms in the literature and scaling down items that should continue to be investigated.

Littlejohn (1987) explains that one of the three ways (extension, intension, and revolution) that systematic inquiry or research helps a discipline grow is to "develop increasingly precise knowledge about specific concepts and processes" (as cited in Frey, et al., 1991, p. 26). This process is intention. Frey et al. adds that "communication research is needed for two reasons: (1) To extend growth of the discipline, and (2) apply what we know" (p. 26).

There would be little point in investigating and synthesizing communication training items without the next logical step--application. Application is viewed within the context of this study as providing information to the training community at large in the form of communication training offered and deemed important that could be included in training curriculums. The goal here is to better equip organizations with specific communication training terms or items that are tailored to employees' needs as well as organizational needs.

The study begins with a statement of the rationale and an extensively researched lateral review across several literature bases. This lateral approach of borrowing from several research bases provides an integrative, fitting context for studies of a multidisciplinary nature. Information from various sources and several disciplines are then synthesized and analyzed to provide a context for communication training and development.

Socioeconomic issues are addressed as a backdrop for the rationale for this study. These influences have set the stage for great change in organizational systems and organizational life. Organizational systems will be viewed through the lens of the theoretical framework adopted for the study--systems theory. Results of this study could reinforce evidence of the importance of effective communication to organizational systems. Within this framework, communication is viewed as dynamic and interdependent. The impact of communication on organizational outputs (goals) can be seen as positive or negative, depending on the quality of communication. Thus, communication training plays a significant role in the lives of individuals and in organizational effectiveness.

To reiterate, this study intends to identify communication skills/training that human resource managers and trainers perceive as important and ascertain which communication skills have been offered in training programs for the years 1998-2000. The study argues for the importance of communication to organizational health as evidenced in the literature. The study acknowledges evidence pointing to increases in training activity.

The problem lies in the lack of communication-specific information focused on skills training. Up to this point, no clear snapshot or picture showing the exact composition of communication skills training has emerged. The picture is fuzzy and blurred at best. Therefore, assuming that communication training is of some importance to organizational health and that communication training might benefit those engaged in organizational systems, it seems worthwhile to investigate the precise nature of communication training. This will be accomplished by probing the perceptions of managers and trainers who are actively involved in practice to capture the state of the art.

Ideally, the study will help clarify the nature of communication training and add a sense of coherence to this dynamic, diversified field of study. In other words, the study hopes to provide information that leads to better definitions, congruence of terms, and possible templates of practice. In the words of Sue Hayden, Director of Solutions Marketing for Systems, Application, and Products in Data Processing (SAP), when asked about connecting training and/or knowledge transfer to bottom line issues, she replied, "How do you define the skills and competencies needed [and] how do you recognize skill gaps and then put in place the solutions that will close those gaps?" (p. 45). This is the type of questioning that provoked this study.

> *When something is everything, then it is nothing.*
> (cited in Cummings, Long, & Lewis, 1987, p. 294).

Rationale

> *The future 's already arrived; it 's just not evenly distributed yet.*
> William Gibson, novelist
> (Executive Excellence, 1999, p. 1).

Future Forces

The rationale for this study stems primarily from 13 future forces or trends as reported by McLagan (1987) and five major themes that emerged throughout the literature and are largely agreed upon. McLagan (1987) first noted that the field of human resource development is undergoing and will continue to undergo major transformations in its efforts to assist people in planned learning (p. 223). The combination of outside pressures coupled with new developments in organizational, group, and individual learning methods and perspectives led to changes in an already dynamic field of study. The author describes these forces as trends that can affect human resource development (HRD) professionals. Specifically, three areas of challenge are identified: (1) "challenges to organizations; (2) challenges in the work force and its role in organizations; and (3) shifts in human resource management and development practices" (p. 223).

Within these three broad areas of challenge for the future, McLagan highlights 13 future forces:

1. Increased pressure and capacity to measure workforce productivity, performance, cost-effectiveness, and efficiency.

2. Increased pressure to demonstrate the value, impact, quality, and practicality of HRD services.

3. Accelerated rate of change and more uncertain environment.

4. Increased emphasis on customer service and expectation of quality products and services from the workforce.

5. Increased sophistication and variety of tools, technologies, methods, theories, and choices in HRD.

6. Increased diversity (demographics, values, experience) at all levels of the workforce.

7. Increased expectations for higher levels of judgment and flexibility in worker contribution (specifically, for more creativity, risk taking, adaptation to change, and teamwork).

8. Increased use of systems and technology in the workplace.

9. Business strategies that concentrate more on human resources and require strategic HRD actions.

10. Changed emphasis in organizations from loyalty to merit, accountability, performance, and relevant skills.

11. Globalization of business; increased and expanded international markets, joint ventures, overseas ownerships, and competition.

12. Increased need for commitment, meaningful work, and participation on the job by a larger proportion of the workforce.

13. Increased use of flatter, more flexible organization designs; small, self-contained work groups; and reduced staff. (McLagan, P., 1989, pp. 13-14).

Rothwell and Sredl (1992) offer definitions of some of the key terms mentioned in the future forces to increase understanding. The authors suggest that *productivity* is generally understood to be the ratio of results in outputs to resource inputs. Now,

however, this term denotes "a ratio of all measurable output (finished units, partial units, and other outputs associated with quantity produced) to the sum of all measurable inputs (computer expenses, robotics expenses, labor, materials, energy, capital, data processing expenses, and other administrative expenses)" (p. 225). Carkhuff (1987) notes that "measurements of productivity in most areas are reflected in financial measurements of costs and benefits and thus profitability" (p. 9). Further, costs mean investments, and benefits are returns on what is done. The implications for training are clear in this context; the paradox is evident. Although HRD and training are about helping individuals and organizations through planned learning, the bottom line issues have been and will remain to be in terms of profitability and cost/benefit ratios.

Cost-effectiveness or *effectiveness* denotes "the extent to which an activity or program meets and fulfills an objective or need, or brings about the desired results" (McLagan, p. 225). In relation to training, this is ideally managed with the use of needs assessment and evaluation. The desired outcomes are compared systematically with results achieved. Determinations then are made as to whether the ROE was obtained. In other words, do the benefits outweigh the costs of the training or program? Did the training do what it was supposed to do?

While effectiveness is most easily understood as "doing the right thing," *efficiency*, on the other hand means something quite different--"doing things right" (McLagan, 1987, p. 225). McLagan explains that efficiency indicates "the amount of a service output produced as related to the amount of input required to produce it" (p. 225). Simply put, it is the ratio of output in terms of service or product to every unit of input in terms of

dollars or people. In the context of training, practitioners attempt to assess causality in terms of quality and/or quantity of training provided for a specific dollar amount. Many variables enter into these cost ratio equations, i.e., hours of training, performance results, trainer evaluations; but the basic ratio remains a standard in determining "wise" investments or efficiency.

Similar forecasts for the future world of work are touted by Abernathy, Allerton, Barron, Galagan, and Salopek (1999) who cite further change as a given. They refer to a not-for-profit business panel called "Talent Alliance," comprised of members from such well-known organizations as Lucent Technologies, DuPont, GTE, Johnson & Johnson, and MetLife in conjunction with human resource executives, leading thinkers from academia, and representatives from strategic human resource and training consulting forums. In a discussion about the future of business, the panel highlighted global competition, global business skills and mind set, and second-language proficiency as critical (p. 24). They noted that more training and development and career planning are possible solutions to addressing an international focus.

Second, the panel identified education as crucial for the future workplace. Certification will continue to be a workplace issue, as well as licensure. ASTD defines certification as "the process by which a nongovernmental organization grants recognition of competence to an individual who has met certain predetermined qualifications specified by that organization" (Lee, 1986, p. 57). Licensure, however, is defined as "something given to a program rather than to a person" (Lee, p. 57). Lee points out that the "key concept" to keep in mind is that certification measures the "competencies" of an individual

against a set of predetermined standards. This is important to note because it is common in human resource literature to come across the term "competencies" as opposed to terminology about skills or skill sets. To be exact, ASTD defines a competency as "an area of knowledge or skill that is critical for producing key outputs" (Rothwell & Sredl, 1992, p. 88).

Hence, within the context of this study, the reader may presume that competencies and skills can be used interchangeably. The discussion of skills versus competencies is left for future studies. Whichever term one uses, the point is clear that certification programs are on the rise and continuing education has become big business. Lifelong learning is no longer viewed as a luxury item, but more as a necessity to remain competitive in the midst of rapid change. Employees will need to continually update skills and upgrade skill sets. In response to this increased demand for learning, corporate universities continue to answer the call as well as educational institutions providing convenience with practitioner instructors, i.e., the University of Phoenix.

Addressing the issue of the bar being raised for educational expectations, the panel reported that employees will be more concerned with their quality of life. These concerns include more income, flexible schedules, and using technology to their benefit, i.e., telecommuting, in order to obtain better life/work balance and improve satisfaction. Overall, given present and future transformations, including globalization and technological advances, the panel concurred that "the dominant trend for the future will

remain the same as it has in the past: To help people cope with change, find their place successfully in the world of work, and build lifelong careers that are productive and satisfying" (Abernathy, et al., 1999, p. 24).

Five Common Themes

In addition to drawing from the 13 future forces, five common themes emerged throughout the literature:

(1) Competent communication is vital to individual and organizational health--"effective communication in organizations is widely considered to be necessary both for the attainment of organizational goals and for individual productivity and satisfaction" (Schockley-Zalabak, 1991, p. xi). Likert (1961) asserts that "communication is essential to the functioning of an organization" (in Schockley-Zalabak, 1991, p. 101). Hickson and Jennings (1993) contend that "communication may be the most important feature in organizations" and that "some researchers have stated that the communication system may be synonymous with the organization itself" (p. 142).

(2) Socioeconomic issues (e.g., competing in a global marketplace, increased diversity of the workforce, communications era/information society, technological advances) have changed the content and nature of work profoundly and have presented an upskilling or re-skilling challenge for employers and employees. "Organizations in our information society need flexible and creative people who have diverse and well-developed communication abilities" (Schockley-Zalabak, 1991, p. 8; Berger, et al., 1989; DiSalvo, 1980). This notion points to lifelong learning becoming a critical and continual process

for today's workers with a focus on communication abilities. "Lifelong learning is much more important than it used to be" (Hakimi, 1999, p. 23). Essentially, the individual worker must now take responsibility for her/his own career management "staying on top of the skills necessary" (Hakimi, p. 23) and keeping current with skills. Many experts believe that the model pattern for all fields arose from occupations in medicine, education, and technology wherein continuing education and certification are commonplace. The implication is that if employees do not take responsibility for additional training, then the organization may need to take the initiative to "upgrade the skills of its own work force" (Hakimi, p. 23).

(3) Billions of dollars are invested annually by companies to provide training (ASTD's 1996-2000 annual reports); however, "despite the growing importance of a firm's human capital and the rhetoric about investing in it, there's little data to support the link between the two" (1998 ASTD State of the Industry Report, p. 1). For example, the 1998 ASTD report states the "$55.3 billion spent by employers on formal training in the United States seems like a substantial amount, [but] is paltry compared to the need so many companies express for a workforce that can compete on the strength of its brainpower" (p. 1). The implication is that even with huge amounts of training ongoing, a skills gap still exists in the workplace. The "'skills gap' is placing increased demands on organizations to bridge the distance between increasing job demands and existing employee skills" (Jones, D. P., 1991, p. 10).

"A day rarely goes by in which a new survey doesn't confirm the scarcity of skilled workers and issue dire predictions about the foreseeable future" (Lee, 1997, p. 28).

Further, the skill levels of entry-level applicants, e.g., high school graduates, shows that "too many do not possess the basic math, reading, and problem-solving abilities to qualify . . . much less the communication skills demanded" (Lee, p. 30). A report from the Council of Competitiveness, "Winning the Skills Race," released in 1998, reports that "skills gaps among workers threaten to derail future success for both workers and business" (p. 1). The report claims that methods or strategies must be developed to counter this skills challenge.

In addition to the skills gap, increasing concern exists regarding evidence of investments in human capital and overall organizational performance. This is in accordance with employers' perceptions participating in the ASTD survey.

(4) Numerous surveys and reports contend that training in communication areas constitutes a substantial part of training expenditures, (e.g., ASTD Industry Reports, the 1995 Bureau of Labor Statistics survey and ASTD's partnering effort with the Times Mirror Training Group, Development Dimensions International, the Forum Corporation, and the U.S. Department of Labor to create the 1997 Human Performances Practices Survey [HPPS]). The BLS and HPPS reports both indicate that communication training, defined as teams and quality training, represented a substantial amount of total training time, but it did not come close to approaching the percentage of training time devoted to computer training and professional and technical training (above 31%) (Bassi, et al., 1998, p. 10).

The 1997 HPPS report defines quality training (which includes competition and business practices) as training on total quality management, business process,

reengineering, benchmarking, and business fundamentals (Bassi & VanBuren, 1998, p. 10). Team training provides individuals and groups with training to improve "communication, collaboration, and teamwork . . . includes resource allocation, conflict resolution, and decision making" (Bassi & VanBuren, 1998, p. 10). One surmises, based on these reports, that communication skills training is considered to be a part of team training.

Prior to these studies, an analysis was conducted based on a survey of more than 1,000 randomly selected employees in response to the concern that "important gaps remain in our knowledge of such fundamental questions as how much training takes place, who provides it and who gets it" (Frazis, Gittleman, and Joyce, 1998, p. 1). The data collected from both employees and employers were compiled from the BLS 1995 Survey of Employer-Provided Training. While working for their employers, 84 percent of employees reported receiving some type of formal training and 96 percent reported receiving informal training. The broad views of training provided proclaim that a "training activity may occur any time employees are taught a skill or provided with information to help them do their jobs better . . . the skill or information may be learned [formally or informally]" (1995 BLS Report, p. 6). Formal training provides for advanced planning and a structured format, and informal training is unplanned and unstructured learning. Job skills training is described as "training that upgrades employee skills, extends employee skills, or qualifies workers for a job" (1995 BLS Report, p. 6). Job skills training most nearly qualifies as the type of training addressed within the context of this paper.

Of the job skills training provided, computer training was the most commonly reported (38.4%). Under general skills training, communications, employee development, and quality training were the most highly reported (40.2%). Interestingly, communication falls under the category of general skills with the likes of basic skills training and occupational safety. This implies one of two things. Either communication skills are not considered skills needed for on-the-job specific performance, or communication skills are considered general skills needed by all employees. In either case, communication training includes "public speaking, conducting meetings, writing, time management, leadership, working in groups or teams, employee involvement, total quality management, and job reengineering" (1995 BLS Report, p. 8). After perusal of the key communication items included, the logical assumption is that the latter implication may be correct.

This type of vague reporting for training is typical with respect to amounts and types of training provided in organizations and serves as partial impetus for the current study focusing on the specific composition of communication training and development.

(5) Employees and employers hold different views of training provided. "According to employers, almost every organization conducts training. But, if you ask employees, you get a different answer . . . almost no one gets training" (Bassi & VanBuren, 1998, p. 11). The 1995 government survey conducted by the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) suggests that employer's reports on numbers of employees receiving training presents a more accurate picture than reports given by employees.

Schaaf (1998) reports to the contrary. The author reports on a recent study entitled "Employees Speak Out on Training," conducted by the joint efforts of Training

magazine, Development Dimensions International (DDI), and the Gallup School of Management. The survey interviews of 1,012 U.S. workers revealed that not only do employees value training, 99 percent stated that "additional training would be useful to them" (Schaaf, 1998, p. 62). In order of preference, 75 percent of respondents indicated that technology training would be first, followed by communication skills to help them work better with people, job-specific and technical skills, and management training. Of the 80 percent reporting that they received training, job-specific and technical skills were the most commonly offered. This includes skills oriented training in the use of new technology. The second most commonly reported training was "soft skills" (teamwork, communication, problem-solving, and customer service) (Schaaf, 1998, p. 60). Soft skills training as a communication umbrella term receives further attention later in the literature review.

Top Ten Trends

Views voiced in the future forces and themes are consistent with the top ten trends noted by Bassi (1996) heralding, in her opinion, where the HRD profession is going. The first trend notes that "skill requirements will continue to increase in response to rapid technological change" (p. 29). The second trend addresses the American workforce being significantly more educated and diverse. The third trend focus on corporate "reshaping" of the business environment, e.g., downsizing, decreased perceptions of employees of job security and loyalty provided by large employers, growth of small businesses, and decreases in employee morale (p. 33). The fourth involves the changing faces of training departments indicating a shrinking in size with outsourcing becoming more prevalent.

Bassi cites in 1995, that 58% of companies interviewed, including Chevron, IBM, Motorola, and Xerox, reported downsizing of their HRD departments (p. 33). The trend recognizes numbers in training staff declining while at the same time training needs appear to be increasing. Apparently, the bulk of training is falling to mid-size and smaller companies as well as being outsourced. Another interesting element of Bassi's report indicates that more women are reported as being involved in training operations--especially one-person training enterprises. Most respondents to her 1996 study with more than 20 years experience were men. However, 65% of the one-person training operations were staffed by women. Thus, the study shows that a large proportion of women seem to be providing a large amount of training.

The fifth trend points to advances in technology affecting the way that training is delivered. "Traditional classroom delivery of training still predominates" (Bassi, p. 33); however, if situations and content warrant appropriateness, then, learning platforms may be well-suited for technological delivery. In 1995, the ASTD Benchmarking Forum group indicated that 70% of training delivery consisted of traditional classroom methods, but that use of Internets and Intranets, distance learning, and computer-based instruction continue to gain ground on the learning/training front.

The sixth trend identified by Bassi (1996) points to training departments' responses to major changes in organizational structures. In other words, training departments are mirroring the overall tendency in Corporate America to back away from traditional, hierarchical business structures or organizations. This can be seen in attempts by training professionals to adapt to leaner work environments by increasing networks

internally and externally with other professionals (a direct effect of outsourcing). Training professionals will need to continue to explore new ways to do more with less, according to Bassi (1996), and work to "ensure that purchased training meets specific needs and that it is available when and where it is needed, at a price that makes sense" (p. 35).

Getting the most from training dollars continues to be an issue for employers. It is noteworthy to mention that Bureau of Labor Statistics figures show that training expenditures are most closely related to company size. Their 1995 report states that "size influences the proportion of a company's total training expenditure. . .companies with fewer than 100 employees are more likely to have a larger percentage of training dollars to outside suppliers" (p. 35). Therefore, it is probably not by accident that ASTD surveys and studies of employers typically include only companies with 100 or more employees. The report does not mention the effect, if any, or relationship between training dollars spent when training occurs in-house. The report assumes that most small to mid-sized companies will outsource training. Therefore, internal training dollars are not addressed, and the reader is to assume that size affects total training expenditures.

The seventh trend brings to light the need for training to focus more on interventions in performance improvement. The pressures of global competition have forced many organizations to reassess every dimension of their current organizational paradigm. Bassi (1996) suggests that organizations will strive to improve business strategies more than in the past in seeking to meet strategic goals. Hence, "training professionals must redirect their focus from traditional development inputs (classes, hours, and so forth) to outputs (performance at individual and organizational levels)" (p. 36).

This implies that measurement and evaluation will continue to be emphasized in corporate cultures. As an interesting sidebar, the framework for this study centers on outputs and organizational goals when perceptions of importance are rated by respondents. Inputs, for purposes of this study, will consist of communication skills training items with outputs reflecting organizational bottom-line goals or issues.

The eighth trend notes that high performance work systems will proliferate. "High performance working systems require, at a minimum, that the people working within them be highly effective . . . that requires training" (Bassi, 1996, p. 37). This means that companies using high performance work practices provide more training. Effectiveness is key and is viewed both in terms of individual performance and financial performance of organizations. Once again, the focus returns to bottom-line organizational issues. Increasingly, especially with the use of high performance work systems, returns on investments will continue to be the focus of much strategic planning and many strategic goals. Bassi (1996) further reports that "all high-performance work systems emphasize a systems perspective" (p. 36).

Clearly, as in much of the HRD literature, the systems approach is prevalent and fits well with this construct since high involvement and team-based practices are at the heart of high-performance practices. Bassi (1996) further adds that "employees need training in group dynamics and interpersonal relations, and systems thinking to better understand how all parts of their organizations fit together and affect each other" (p. 38). The author also notes that communication efforts will be critical to organizations using high-performance practices and need to be "early and throughout" (Bassi, p. 38). This

concept is often referred to as knowledge sharing in organizational development and human resource development literature and is based on prudent communication practices.

The ninth trend concerns the issue of learning organizations. Organizations have been and will continue to become knowledge-based and aware of assets such as intellectual capital. In learning organizations, "training is integral to actual work, emerging as a by-product of work rather than something done in isolation" (Bassi, p. 39). Essentially, training professionals will be required to help employers and employees view the business organization as a system, by taking into account all facets that are crucial to sound organizational health at all levels (individual and the organization as a whole). In this way, determinations can be made regarding which skills to include in training programs thereby assessing which training endeavors will actually meet organizational goals (outputs) effectively.

The term "learning organization" originated with Peter Senge (1990) and has no one ideal model. Learning organizations continue to be created in many different forms, but Bassi (1996) argues that certain features must be included in any definition of these ever-emerging entities. First, it is imperative that learning organizations embrace systems thinking. Second, a climate conducive to individual and collective learning is needed. Third, a view that mistakes and failure are opportunities for learning is required. This coincides with the adage that "if you aren't making mistakes, then, you aren't doing anything." Fourth, learning organizations must make information and resources widely

available. Fifth, learning organizations need to possess a desire for continuous improvement and renewal. And, finally, learning should be integrated with work (Bassi, 1996, p. 40).

The six features of learning organizations foster similarities to elements conducive in creating a learning environment in the classroom. Learning theory and research in communication in the classroom, indicates that these elements are essential for learning to take place. First, and foremost, at any level of educational practice, is the belief that the group operates as a system. Further, within such a system, instruction (teaching/training) cannot occur without communication.

The tenth trend, presented by Bassi (1996) focuses on an emphasis being placed on performance management. Performance management means the practices through which work is defined and reviewed, capabilities are developed, and rewards are distributed" (Lawler, E. E., III, Lawler, E. E., Jr., and Mohrman-Albers, 1995, p. 1). How will this affect training? Training professionals will be expected to stay current and knowledgeable of "employee selection and compensation systems, information management, skill standards, and testing" (Bassi, 1996, p. 41). Skill standards are the area of training most relevant to the focus of this research study.

Skill standards can be defined as "the performance specifications that identify the knowledge, skills, and abilities that an employee needs to perform a job" (Bassi, p. 41-42). Much attention has clustered around the area of job-specific skills since the 1990 report conducted by the Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce of the National Center on Education and the Economy sparked interest in industry skill standards (Bassi,

p. 42). This was followed by the 1994 Goals Education America Act which established the National Skills Standard Board to oversee the development of a "national system of skills standards" (Bassi, p. 42). The standards produced from this project are intended to be used as a baseline for HRD professionals and as guidelines for training departments.

As an offshoot of attempts to develop a base of skill standards, one can expect to see an increase in the amount and types of testing in the workplace. This opens a new can of worms in work environments already feeling the pressures and turbulence of rapid change. However, Bassi (1996) informs the reader that "workplace testing . . . is becoming a growth industry [and] is used at every critical juncture in employment" (p. 42). Testing can provide beneficial information for employers as well as employees in making well-informed decisions. But, case law may continue to be in a "constant state of flux to define what is acceptable practice and what is not" because of the "potential for affecting women and minorities" adversely and ethical and legal considerations involved in some types of testing (Bassi, p. 42)

The Problem

> *Designing instruction begins with the specification of skills and knowledge required for effective job performance*
>
> Robert Gagn'e
> The Conditions of Learning (5th ed.).

Attempts to respond to challenges in the workplace have resulted in increased training efforts by employers in corporate America. "Training is [seen as] one of several human resource management practices that can be used to increase a company's competitiveness" (Noe, 1999, p. 3). Notions of lifelong learning and accountability have

been embraced to address the push for more training and/or better quality training. The organizational mantra about the importance of effective communication to the health of the organizational system is ongoing and perhaps even debatable to some. Cummings, Long, and Lewis (1987) argue that based on reports from many large corporations, "perhaps the single most important need felt by corporate heads is for better communication skills by their employees [and] they are willing to invest huge resources to make this happen because skill in communication is the key ingredient to effective organizational communication" (p. 23).

Interestingly, little agreement or convergence exists concerning the nature and content of communication training and development. Descriptions and definitions of communication training and communication skills vary with each inquiry. "Companies tend to attribute a wide variety of problems to lack of communication even though they have no clear definition of the concept of communication and have no idea of what they really mean when they call something a communication problem" (Filipczak, 1995, p. 1). Further, communication tends to be included under the guise of "soft skills" training. For example, Pine and Tinley (1993) report that:

> the net effect of 'soft skills' training, which usually involves instructions on such topics as team development, problem solving, communication, listening, and stress management, is hard to appraise . . . however, trainers are increasingly being impelled to provide return-on-investment (ROI) measurements and evaluation on training programs they conduct (p. 1).

Here again questions arise concerning whether communication skills training and "soft skills" training are typically considered synonymous. And, as the authors explain, it

is difficult to concretely report on net effects. "Employers want workers who can solve problems, negotiate with customers, and communicate well . . . these 'soft skills' are hard to measure, but they add value to any job, from welding to accounting" (Lindgren, 1997, p. 2).

This study is directed toward addressing these issues by providing information to benefit educators, employers, employees and others by identifying, describing, and defining communication training and development more specifically. Since more training for the sake of training is not the solution, this investigation also attempts to extract from managers/trainers those communication skills deemed important and practiced.

Clearly, employees either receive training or they do not. And, employees either receive certain types of training or they do not. Equally contradictory evidence could be produced, however, to support either perspective. For example, Plott (1993) reports that as far back as 1993 "about 50 million employees" needed training (p. 1). Further, he calculates that "only 10% of American employees receive training" indicating 90% who do not (p. 1). Moreover, the report states that "less than one percent of the nation's companies do 90% of the training and yet a study done by the Carnegie 'Commission on Workforce Skills' revealed that 80% of the companies believe that their workforce has adequate skills" (p. 1).

It appears that an accurate depiction of training may be influenced by who does the reporting and who funds and designs the study. And, since consistent reporting of training information has not proven to be the norm, the result typically involves "one-shot" case

studies. Premises for prior studies are apparent--to find out what is happening in organizations with respect to communication-specific training. However, to date, the results remain inconclusive.

Communication training and communication skills are viewed as integral parts of an organizational system. "Effective communication is the key to organizational excellence" (Shockley-Zalabak, 1991, p. 7). This notion is reflected by Barnard (1938) who explains that one of the primary responsibilities of executives is the development and maintenance of a system of communication" (cited in Schockley-Zalabak, 1991, p. 7). Further, the literature shows communication to affect organizational systems at every level (intrapersonal, interpersonal, small group, and large group) and to be a catalyst or determinant of organizational outcomes (desirable or undesirable).

If communication is presumed to be of high importance in terms of productivity, return on investment, and organizational goals, then it seems appropriate to fully understand it. Thorough investigation into the communication, human resource, and training literature reveals little in terms of defining or identifying specific communication training and skills deemed important. Scant information is available on the specifics of communication training and even fewer empirical studies, either qualitative or quantitative in nature.

Probably the closest semblance of a model would be the ASTD Industry Reports. These reports use survey instruments to investigate training of all types--technical and soft skills in particular. The results in each report discuss communication skills generically and

offer broad, generalized definitions. Therefore, the reports serve well as a basic framework. However, they need to be redesigned to accurately and specifically focus on communication training.

Many of the Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM) studies and American Society for Training and Development (ASTD) studies report competencies needed by HR practitioners (managers or trainers). The current study attempts to address specific communication training provided and which communication skills items are considered important. This study targets communication training in the workplace for all employees, not the skills needed by mangers and trainers specifically.

It appears that an extensive gap exists between the apparent importance of communication training and the quantitative or qualitative research available. There also appears to be a gap between the communication and training literature. Communication and training literature abound. However, research in the area of communication training is minimal.

Significance of the Study

"First and foremost, the scientific community will judge the merit of our ideas" (Dahnke and Miller, 1989, p. 337). In this vein, Wood (1974) draws distinctions between statistical significance and psychological significance; the latter refers to the value of a particular study as a contribution to human knowledge. "[It is] determined by the quality of the idea, the adequacy of the test, and the clarity of the results" (p. 239). Of these three criteria, the author contends that the value of the good idea will long outlive adequacy of the test and clarity of results.

One goal of the study is to review and synthesize research and literature that captures the art and science of communication and the equally dynamic field of training and development (a mixture of adult education, human resource management, economics, political science, etc.). To this end, an attempt has been made to meld literature from these areas into a cohesive picture of the current state of communication training and development. Additionally, and perhaps most importantly, a communication-specific survey instrument has been developed in an area where none has existed. As a partial replication (with new features), it has been designed in a deliberate attempt to extract very communication-specific data.

Academic and business communities will benefit from this information in the form of tangible data. This study identifies, through the questionnaire, specific communication items and training practiced. The same 15 items are than rated by practitioners in terms of their perceived importance. Finally, the survey asks how much of the total training provided is communication training. This assessment should lead to better definitions of terms. It also is likely that better training programs could be developed. Third, other researchers could use the survey instrument as a springboard for further research by modifying the study design, refining the existing framework (instrument), and overcoming limitations inherent to this study.

The significance of this study predominantly rests in the development of specific communication items and on perceptions of their importance. Studies of this type contribute not only by information collected, but also in the new questions provoked in the inquiry process. To this end, results of this study should help clarify communication

training and benefit practitioners involved in the design and implementation of effective communication training programs, e.g. improving assessment, designing communication-specific assessments and tools, and allocating dollars for such programs more wisely. Researchers and practitioners are encouraged to use the communication training instrument designed in this study as a template and overcome limitations within this study in efforts to further expand the communication training knowledge base. In sum, the significance of this study lies in the gathering and analysis of communication-specific information that ultimately will be used in practice.

Rationale for the Research Questions

Dahnke and Miller (1990) outline "four major types of communication research: (1) exploratory research, (2) descriptive research, (3) correlational research, and (4) experimental research" (p. 312). The major emphasis in formulative or exploratory research "is on discovery of ideas and insights" (Selltiz, Jahoda, Deutsch, and Cook, 1959, p. 50, cited in Dahnke, Fernandez-Collado, and Clatterbuck, 1990). Three purposes of exploratory studies concern the "discovery of significant variables in the field situation, discovery of relations among variables, and laying the groundwork for later, more systematic, and rigorous testing of hypotheses" (Kerlinger, 1973, p. 406, cited in Dahnke, et al., 1990).

The current study focuses on the investigation and dissemination of communication training items and development of a measuring tool. This type of exploratory and descriptive study serves as a precursor to further studies and developments. Stringham (1992) states that "the process of communication is one of

discovery and invention [and that] robust communication is a tool for productivity" (p. 1). Simply stated, if discovery and invention describe the communication process, then it follows that the research approach in a communication-specific context should seek to do the same.

Dahnke and Miller (1989) further report that exploratory and descriptive studies "both have minimal structure" (p. 313). Descriptive studies typically evidence low levels of structure, but more than exploratory studies in that research questions generally are developed in advance of data collection. An important goal of descriptive studies is to reveal "an accurate and complete description of the phenomenon" (Dahnke and Miller, 1989, p. 315). "Description is the foundation on which social science research rests" (Dahnke and Miller, 1989, p. 214). In the spirit of categorization, Parry (1998) states that the ancients believed that "to name it is to know it" (p. 62).

The current study has two goals: First, explore "what is" and then to accurately and precisely describe what is discovered. Dahnke and Miller refer to this as "shedding light and . . . seeking to draw an exact and detailed picture of communication phenomena" (p. 330). Because of the nature of such endeavors, "an exploratory researcher has few initial research questions or hypotheses and rather is guided by the data as the research progresses" (p. 313).

Research studies that are exploratory in nature "tend not to be guided by hypotheses [as opposed to] studies that are more confirmatory in nature" (Borg and Gall, 1989, p. 32). Borg and Gall (1989) go on to state that confirmatory studies "tend to be theoretically based and focused on a limited set of well-measured variables [whereas]

exploratory research tends to study many variables and their relationships in order to further understanding of the phenomena" (p. 32). The purpose is stated as a "question or objective rather than a hypothesis" (Borg and Gall, 1989, p. 32.). Thus, research questions have been posited to provide an appropriate contextual fit. Null hypotheses have been formally stated for research question 3, but the null is implicitly stated for research question 2. Non-directional, descriptive studies tend to be "primarily concerned with 'what is'" (Borg and Gall, 1989, p. 331).

Epstein (1999) reports that "exploratory research is often conducted because a problem has not been clearly defined as yet, or its real scope is as yet unclear" (p. 1). The author further suggests that exploratory research is the initial research conducted before more conclusive research is undertaken and that many times it can help to determine the best research design, data collection method, and selection of subjects. (p. 1).

Research Questions

Fraenkel and Wallen (1996) report that "good" research questions possess four characteristics (p. 26):

1. The question is feasible (i.e., it can be investigated without an undue amount of time, energy, or money).

2. The question is clear (i.e., most people would agree as to what the key words in the question mean).

3. The question is significant (i.e., it is worth investigating because it will contribute important knowledge about the human condition).

4. The question is ethical (i.e., it will not involve physical or psychological harm or damage to human beings, or to the natural or social environment of which they are a part)(pp. 26-27).

The wide range of training of all types offered by U.S. organizations boggles the mind. However, zeroing in on one specific type of training (communication) presents challenges as well. Since analysis of available research on communication training and development provided an unclear picture of what is considered to be communication training and communication skills, questions emerged. For example, the lack of continuity of terms alone merits further investigation. Further, reviewing the research led to questions concerning which communication skills and training are considered to be important by human resource practitioners. In order to partially fill this void, the following research questions were developed:

RQ1: What constitutes communication training and development in organizations?

RQ2: What communication skills are considered important by human resource practitioners and trainers in organizations?

RQ3: Are there significant differences between females and males with respect to leadership, listening, verbal communication, and nonverbal communication in terms of amount of training provided and perceptions of importance?

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

> *There may be no single thing more important in our efforts to achieve meaningful work and fulfilling relationships than to learn to practice the art of communication.*
>
> (Max DePree, Leadership is an Art)

> *The concept of communication training is as old as the Sophists of ancient Greece who trained individuals in rhetorical skills--often for a fee.*
>
> (Cummings, Long, & Lewis, 1987, p. 305).

This study of communication skills training is informed by several areas of research. The first is the broadest area of study, human resource development, and provides a historical context for the study. Human resource development, as an applied field, draws on theories and research from many disciplines, including education, management science, industrial and individual psychology, communication, counseling, organization behavior, general systems science, sociology, political science, policy science, and the humanities (McLagan, 1987, p. 2). The second research base, training and development, is an integral part of the human resource development literature. "Human resource development (HRD) [involves] the integration and use of training and development, organization development, and career development to improve individual, group, and organizational effectiveness" (McLagan, p. 3).

Communication training, which focuses specifically on the communication components of training in a comprehensive sense, is informed by an integration of training and communication research bases with the latter being the predominant contributor.

Finally, these research bases join to create a background against which communication skills can be more effectively addressed in order to promote better understanding. This context also allows for the emergence of common themes throughout the literature, including the predominance of systems theory as a theoretical base for each field of research.

Thus, this review of the literature follows the framework suggested by McLagan due to the integrated (more than the sum of its parts) nature of the subject matter studied (McLagan, 1987, p. 3). Communication skills training, in this way, develops naturalistically from historical and theoretical bases. This comprehensive format, borrowing from deductive reasoning (broad base of information to smaller and more specific) includes the following topic areas: (1) Human resource development, (2) training and development, (3) communication training and development, (4) communication skills, and (5) systems theory.

Human Resource Development/Foundations of the Field

> *Human Resource Development (HRD) means the integrated use of training and development, organization development, and career development to improve individual, group and organization effectiveness.*
>
> (McLagan, 1989, p. 7).

Human resource development has been referred to in the literature as early as 1958, but the term "was not popularized by Leonard Nadler until ten years later" (Rothwell, W. J. & Sredl, H. J., 1992, p. 45). Rothwell and Sredl identify eight major influences that contributed to the evolution of human resource development as a field of study--economics, management, communication, education, sociology, humanities, and

political science. Nadler (1970) , more than two decades ago, suggested that the field of human resource management "has been around for a long time but is still not fully understood" (p. 1). He asserts that part of the reason for this is "the lack of agreement on defining the field--similar to the problem with adult education" (Nadler, 1970, p. 1). However, based on his works which in 1970 amassed over 40 years of research, he concludes that, for him, HRD is defined as "organized learning experiences in a definite time period to increase the possibility of improving job performance and growth" (p. 1).

Economic Theory

First, economics played a role as different economic theories developed and were transformed from those focusing on labor (labor theory of value), productive agencies (utility theory of value), and the tradition that capital is the pre-eminent factor in production, e.g., John Maynard Keyes and Milton Friedman to one emphasizing that labor is a human resource (human capital school of economics) (Rothwell & Sredl, p. 47). This represented a revolutionary change in perceptions about employees who, up to that point, had been perceived more as production units (labor expenses) instead of human capital assets. Supporters of this philosophy refer to the increase in the U.S. Gross National Product (GNP) and coincident investments in education and training between 1919 and 1957 as proof that human capital growth has been a major force in the economy (Rothwell & Sredl, p. 48).

Management Theory

Rothwell & Sredl (1989) state that "management theory is essentially a unified way of looking at the nature of people, work, and organizations" (p. 49). Management theory

influenced the emergence of human resource development beginning with Frederick Taylor, his major work being The Principles of Modern Management (1911), and creation of the Classical School of Management Thought (scientific management). At about the same time, Henri Fayol was writing about management theory in Europe and basically supplementing Taylor's philosophy. Fayol contributed his fourteen principles that are still referred to today in the literature.

A second wave challenged scientific management thinkers of the time. These management theorists represented the human relations school. Elton Mayo and F. J. Roethlisberger drew important conclusions from a series of experiments conducted at the Hawthorne, Illinois Western Electric facility (Rothwell & Sredl, p. 51). Many questions have arisen concerning the methodology of the Hawthorne studies and accuracy of the conclusions since that time. However, their studies did shed new light upon traditional perceptions of American workers.

Most early management theories assumed dominance by management (paternal and rational). "The body of knowledge relevant to that managerial philosophy can be reduced to one directive, 'Give instructions clearly and firmly'" (Heath, 1994, p. 1). Seminal managerial philosophies of this era included works written by Max Weber (1947) who perceived the organization as a "bureaucracy exerting control through the application of rational rules" (Heath, p. 33). Mayo (1949) then challenged the bureaucratic model by introducing terms like organizational atmosphere or climate. Simon (1957) focused on decision-making processes, and McGregor (1960, 1968), with Theory X and Theory Y, purported that managers manage employees according to their views of the workers.

Likert (1961) expanded this two-part model into four parts and "based it on the same assumptions regarding how managers' perceptions of workers affect their managerial style" (p. 33).

Researchers later demonstrated that human relations are helpful for the individual and the organization. Hence, the human resources approach evolved. The other dominant force in management theory since the 1960's is credited to Ludwig von Bertlanffy (1937) and is known as General Systems Theory (GST). Kenneth Boulding and Norbert Wiener (Rothwell & Sredl, p. 53) refined the theory. Over time, "behavioral scientists, basing their work on the assumptions of human relations theory, concluded that organizations are social systems composed of interacting, interrelated, and inter-dependent parts" (Rothwell & Sredl, p. 53). Donald Katz and Robert Kahn (1978) offer ten characteristics of open systems in their seminal piece of work focusing on the organization as an inter-related system containing subsystems, related to the suprasystem and inhabiting individuals in a system of roles. Resulting from these non-traditional themes, management theory became revolutionized and "locus of control shifted from the exclusive domain of manager toward a cooperative balance between bosses and employees" (p.1).

A prominent shift is then made toward theory which targeted process approaches instead of structure according to Morgan (1986) who used metaphor in prescribing that management philosophies and strategies need to be contingent.

> Contingency theory suggests that management functions and styles are best when carefully tailored to outcomes desired, circumstances facing the organization, tasks involved, and abilities of personnel; conversely, maladapted management styles lead to dysfunctional organizations (p. 34).

Implications of this shift to the study of organizational communication included making communication the center of managerial and organizational studies. The "focal point of organizational communication analysis is the acts people perform that are meaningful for themselves and others, along with their thoughts about organizing and working" (Katz and Kahn, 1978, p. 2). Now, the individual and the science/art of communication move to the forefront.

Sociology

Rothwell and Sredl (1992) report that "HRD professionals owe a significant debt to sociologists" (p. 60). And, that "present-day sociology focuses on issues such as interactionism (interactions between society and individuals), phenomenology (focusing on perceptions of individual reality derived internally rather than externally), and ethnomethodology (focusing on everyday methods that individuals use to acquire knowledge about self and society)" (p. 60). The authors note that this had led to studies of organizational culture and individual socialization.

Political Science

The roots of political science can be traced to Aristotle. Work in this field has predominantly focused on governmental issues, specifically government institutions. Rothwell and Sredl (1992) contend that "political scientists have focused more recently on issues such as power, government, political decision making, policy analysis, policy formulation, and policy evaluation . . . the power elite" (p. 61).

Psychology

Psychology has greatly influenced the field of human resource development by the very nature of the field--study of the human mind. Rothwell and Sredl (1992) report that the greatest influence for HRD can be seen in work done concerning "human development, human learning, organizational or group change. . .human adaptability and self-directedness" (p. 49). Work done in the interest of helping individuals assess personality characteristics, e.g., the Myers-Briggs Type Inventory and Strong Interest Inventory, have added greatly to the career development toolkit available to employees interested in either transitioning or upward mobility.

Education

According to Rothwell and Sredl (1992), education is "the study of knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values, and the means by which important information and values are transmitted to members of a culture" (p. 61). Nadler (1970) describes education as "learning to prepare the individual for a different but identified job" (p. 2). Of course, Nadler's take on education stems from an HRD perspective and background and is closely tied to training and development objectives rather than education in a generic sense. Thus, education theories provide rich literature concerning processes of instruction and learning, e.g., andragogy and pedagogy (particularly of interest to HRD professionals).

Humanities

Rothwell and Sredl (1992) emphasize that the greatest influence humanities has had upon HRD concerns method rather than subject matter. HRD and humanists have

long been concerned with the human condition, e.g., values, ethics, and morals, more than with physical phenomena.

Communication

In discussing communication's influences on HRD, Rothwell and Sredl (1992) explain that "communication has to do with the exchange of meaning, through symbols [and] is the basic process underlying all management and learning functions" (p. 57). The authors stress that through the evolution of various models (mathematical/cybernetic, behavioral, transactional), communication theory (especially organizational communication) has contributed to the study of human interaction and learning. "After all, learning most often occurs through the communication process [and] what is learned and how it is applied in organizational settings are influenced by communication within and between groups and individuals" (Rothwell & Sredl, 1992, p. 59).

As noted by Heath (1994), "an understanding of communication can help managers and their personnel coordinate efforts needed to achieve their company's mission" (p. 2). "As people interact, information is presented in countless conversations, memos, meetings, and corporate communication vehicles, such as employee newsletters. Each organization comes alive and becomes meaningful through communication" (Heath, 1994, p. 5). Heath reports that:

> communication is a variable taken for granted so that much of what employees do each work day may not seem to depend on their ability to communicate but rather on their performance of work tasks, such as operating machines, making architectural designs, selling hamburgers, or creating and storing information. However, even when people do not overtly and intentionally engage in communication, what they do--such as operate a machine--and how

> they do it serves as information and has impact on other people, internal and external to the organization. Actions are meaningful and speak loudly; communication occurs when the actions of one person affect another (p. 4).

What then, are the purposes or motivations of communication studies in the context of organizations? Heath (1994) conveys that the purposes are twofold: (1) "To make organizations effective, and (2) to increase people's happiness in organizations--empower them and give them the personal satisfaction that their time is well spent" (p. 2). Effective communications are explained by the author as being productive and of high quality. "Productivity entails the ratio of input to output; as material and human resources expended to achieve individual and organizational output decline, productivity increases. Quality deals with levels of performance outcome measured in ability to meet or exceed customer and other stakeholder expectations" (Heath, 1994, p. 3). Basically, improving organizational effectiveness "centers on factors that increase employees' ability and willingness to be effective" (Heath, 1994, p. 3).

To further emphasize the importance of people in organizations and their relationships, Heath reports that the purpose of pointing out the importance of communication is not to in any way show disregard for the basic functions of the organization, i.e., "to manufacture products, to provide a service, to pay dividends, etc." (p. 21)--but "what would happen to a company if it could not communicate? How long would it continue to operate?" (p. 21). Conrad (1990) would add that employees need to understand the relationship between effective communication and the successful operation of the organization (p. 5). Additionally, the author reports that a prime skill to be

developed by employees whose careers will be spent in organizational contexts is that of interpersonal competence--a critical skill for career advancement in his view. Thus, two kinds of knowledge become relevant: (1) the employee's knowledge of the impact of effective communication upon organizational success; and (2) the employees understanding of effective communication in an organizational context in order to meet personal goals.

A recent Pennsylvania State University survey documents the importance of communication skills in the workplace (Tubbs & Moss, 1994, cited in Galvin & Cooper, 1996, p. 268). In the study, corporate executives rated qualities they considered appealing in recent graduates. Oral and written communication skills received 83.5% of the responses, followed by leadership skills receiving 79.7%; analytical skills receiving 75.3%; ability to work in teams, 71.4%; ability to manage rapid change with 65.9%; sense of social, professional, and ethical responsibility with 64.3%; and financial management skills receiving 46.7%. Clearly, oral and written communication skills received the highest ratings by the executives surveyed. "To be successful, we need effective interpersonal communication skills in order to gain ideas, perspectives, and emotional support from others (Schein, 1978, cited in Galvin & Cooper, 1996). Further, all types of communication in the organizational context "affect the relationships and even the productivity of an organization" (Galvin & Cooper, 1996, p. 267).

As illustrated by the this review, of the eight major influences on the field of human resource development, each contributor adds something unique and necessary to the total picture. The interrelationship among contributors provides a backdrop for further

discussion of one communication theme (relationship of communication to training and development). Since the basis of the study focuses on communication skills and communication training and development, it is imperative to better define training and development--first generically, and then communication specifically.

Training and Development

Due much to the reality of today's workers being placed in an information based economy, training has been and continues to be an integral part of business. One hears much about the impact of speed and information technologies on the organizational training front; however, seldom does one see evidence showing that these investments in human capital are taking place, which specific types of training have been offered, or that investments in human capital "make a difference in a company's performance" (1998 ASTD State of the Industry Report, p. 1).

According to the 17th annual Industry Report prepared by Training magazine, the total dollars budgeted for formal training by organizations in 1998 alone was $60.7 billion (van Adelsbert & Trolley, 1999, p. ix). In 1999, U.S. organizations budgeted $62.5 billion for formal training. The dollar difference between those two years represents a three percent increase. Some 54.5 million employees received training from employers in 1998 alone. These numbers include training of all types, but the survey did concentrate specifically on technology-related issues due to the increased use of technology in the workplace. It is not possible to ascertain from the report the amount, if any, of specific types of communication training budgeted for or provided by employers in the organization's surveyed.

According to ASTD's 1999 State of the Industry Report, the results from its Benchmarking Service survey studies show that the typical organization spent $2 million in 1997, up from the 1996 average of $1.4 million and the average leading-edge classified firm spent $4.1 million on training. This is up from $3.4 million in 1996. This denotes a two to one difference between the two classifications of companies. Benchmarking Service companies had an average employment size of 5,147 while Leading Edge companies report employment of 2,245 employees. A third category, Benchmarking Forum group reports 26,790 employees. This implies that company size is a determining factor in amount of dollars invested for training purposes.

The Report explains that "leading edge" firms represent the "pinnacle" of training practice in the United States in the amount of training and the types of human performance practices provided. By using cluster analysis, 55 participants were chosen from organizations listed in the Benchmarking Service group. Benchmarking companies (Service group and Forum group) make up voluntary participants who agree to participate in ASTD surveys in order to benefit from the results. For confidentiality reasons, names of these companies cannot be provided. Leading edge companies score highly on criteria items such as percent of employees trained, training expenditures per employee, use of four innovative training practices, use of six high performance work practices, and use of seven innovative compensation practices (ASTD Industry Report, 1999, p. 3).

Overall, the 1999 Report states that there is now compelling evidence (first-time released information on benchmarking companies) and their analyses indicate that "training investments . . . are clearly associated with improved firm performance [and]

organizations that are falling behind in their training today may well be putting their future success as risk" (ASTD Industry Report, 1999, p. 1). Performance items included profitability, quality of products and services, customer satisfaction, employee satisfaction, and ability to retain essential employees (p. 24). Respondents reported that in their perceptions, definite links existed between amounts of training dollars invested and these five general outcomes. Comparisons were made between two years (1997-1998) using cross-sectional analysis showing that the link is strong, on the brink of a causative relationship; however, longitudinal studies would need to be done to prove this. The limitations of the study further reflect that survey respondents are voluntary members of specific benchmarking groups working in collaboration with ASTD to provide data on training and organizational practices.

Training for the sake of training cannot be advised by anyone. In fact, a report from The Consortium for Research on Emotional Intelligence in Organizations at Rutgers University contends that "U.S. companies waste over $9.5 billion annually on training programs" (Hakimi, 1999, p. 22). Hakimi goes on to state that many experts possess "grand" notions about training and its importance to the organization and its employees. However, through working on a research endeavor with a corporate university and a graduate business school, she reports that not only is much of the training provided not meeting the expectations of management and/or trainee, but much of the skills training provided could be considered "sub-basic." For example, the report identifies a "hierarchy

of trainable skills: basics, communication, technology and leadership" (Hakimi, 1999, p. 22). It is reported that the brunt of training focuses on the K-12 concepts, including literacy.

Another entity interested in workforce training is the San Diego Workforce Partnership. Director, Larry Fitch, explains that through the newly developed human resource council, "made up of some of the area's leading companies," an attempt is being made to establish a set of skill standards. Those standards include "communication, computer literacy and any occupation-specific skills" (Hakimi, 1999, p. 22).

Communication, according to Hakimi's report (1999), is typically seen in training at the executive or management level. She believes that is due, in part, (based on perceptions of those she interviewed) to the fact that organizational management is concerned with returns on investment whether those be tangible or intangible. The true value of training is almost always viewed in terms of reward and business needs being met. Hakimi points to assessment as being the key to organizations determining overall satisfaction with training. Assessment is critical. Obviously, the better and more specifically we find out what our training needs are in advance of providing training, the more satisfying the results. Training programs that work should also include formal and informal evaluations as integral parts of their systems. The crucial component, however, always concerns what types of skills training should be offered to each target group. That brings us back to the issue of training content.

Communication is definitely identified by many "experts" as an important part of any skills program, especially at higher organizational levels. In particular, communication has been identified by ASTD as the number one skill on their list of "Top 10 Skills of Good Leaders." Communication appears at the top of the list with 57%, followed by interpersonal skills (49.5%), strategic planning (39.8%), change management (36.6%), coaching (30%), decision making (21.5%), teamwork (20.4%), problem solving (19.4%), goal setting (11.8%), and computer literacy (4.3%). Surprisingly, in the midst of rapid technological changes, practitioners probed in the ASTD report, rated computer literacy tenth. And in the midst of this reporting, the tendency prevails as throughout the literature to classify communication as a distinct category from interpersonal skills and the other skills reported. The reader surmises from this that communication rates the highest as a skill for good leadership, but apparently is considered a skill within itself and set apart from other skills that could arguably be considered communication-related skills.

It is also interesting to note that there is an ongoing conversation among practitioners that the clear lines drawn between soft skills training and hard skills training has become blurred (Hakimi, 1999, p. 23). Hakimi reports that the executive director for Leadership Education Advancing Performance (LEAP), Kathy Leck, stated that companies will primarily be interested in global fluency and entrepreneurship as the "most desired skills" (p. 23) for the future. Thus, corporations will desire their employees to think globally and financially, as well as possess needed soft skills, i.e. communication training. Leck explains that employees, in their quest for lifelong learning, should be able

to see their contribution and affect on their company's bottom-line. The general consensus is that the best way to do this would be to enhance leadership skills. "Leadership, then, is the elusive skill employers want most to instill in workers" (Hakimi, 1999, p. 23). And, according to the "Top 10" list, communication and other related communication items are of utmost importance to performance of that skill.

Definitions

Definitions do much to increase understanding. This point is vividly addressed in Voltaire's, Candide, in the conversational passage with Dr. Pangloss. Slightly paraphrased, it reads, "if you are going to converse with me, define your terms."

In the context of this study, it is important to clearly define the terms "training" and "development" and make distinctions between the two. Granted, both are concerned with the educating of employees, but from different vantage points.

Fitzgerald (1992) defines training as "the acquisition of knowledge and skill for present tasks . . . a tool to help individuals contribute to the organization and be successful in their current positions . . . a means to an end" (p. 81). The author further notes that the key issues when addressing training are centered around helping people learn and develop skills while simultaneously ensuring that employee behaviors are linked with performance. This way, the organization stands a better chance of receiving some benefit.

Development, as defined by Fitzgerald (1992), denotes the "acquisition of knowledge and skill that may be used in the present or future [preparing] individuals to enrich the organization in the future [and] the act of being involved in many different types

of training activities and classes" (p. 24). In sum, development involves a long-term future focus and training concentrates on developing skills and knowledge in the short term. Fitzgerald (1992) adds that training takes place in classes whereas development more than likely occurs after completion of the class. The common thread for training and development is learning, and the importance of learning cannot be overemphasized. "In this era of global economies, increased competition, and advancing technologies, learning may be the only real competitive advantage we have" (Fitzgerald, 1991, p. 84). Essentially, learning will continue to be of value to individuals as well as organizations whether in the form of training and/or development programs. However, for the purpose of remaining within the context or boundaries of this paper, training is the chosen construct for study.

Training, as defined by Nadler (1980), means "learning, provided by employers to employees, that is related to their present jobs" (p. 66). Lawrie (1990) defines training as "a change in skills. The major focus is on acquisition of knowledge and skills for presently known tasks. The emphasis is on enhancing skills fundamental to present jobs" (p. 44). McLagan (1989), in The Models, published by ASTD, describes training as "identifying, assuring, and helping develop, through planned learning, key competencies that enable individuals to perform their current jobs [therefore] training's primary emphasis is on individuals in their work roles" (p. 7). Definitions of training tend to focus attention on current or present job situations. Accordingly, Noe (1999) adds that "training refers to planned effort by a company to facilitate employee's learning of job-related competencies

. . . knowledge, skills, or behaviors that are critical for successful job performance" (p. 4). Noe further states that the goal of training is application of this learning (p. 4).

The terms "training" and "development" can be differentiated in that training focuses on work at hand, while development helps prepare workers for the future (Arnold & McClure, 1989, p. 4-6). Arnold and McClure (1989) state that training teaches specific skills to individuals and can take place at any time in one's career and can take place at several levels: (1) informational, (2) behavioral, and (3) results-oriented. The authors further contend that development "includes, but does not stop at training. . .includes more conceptual understanding of the 'why' and more cognitive recognition of how certain behaviors or skills fit into the wider context of the entire organization. . .a systems approach" (p. 8). Nadler (1970) defines training and development succinctly: "Training [is] learning related to [the] present job, [and] development [is] learning for growth of the individual, but not related to a specific present or future job" (p. 2).

Training and development can be offered informally or planned formally by using a systematic approach, such as instructional systems design (ISD) based on general systems theory. Both training and development activities can be delivered on or off site to individuals or groups.

Stewart (1986) adds that performance in training is composed of "part skill and part motivation" (p. 248). A determination needs to be made as to which one is causing more of the problem by conducting needs analyses/assessments. Secondly, determine which part of a skill is lacking--skill being a combination of " both knowledge and

experience." Third, find the bottom-line concerning how much the problem is costing the organization and if initiating needs analysis probes will prove to be cost-effective and worthwhile. Other factors to keep in mind include determining cost-effectiveness of training present employees versus hiring new trained employees, investigating different modes of training available to ascertain which methods are most suitable, training in-house or using vendors as in outplacement techniques, and deciding to use generic or specific training programs. Many of these questions will be determined by factors such as the training target audience, which levels of the organization are being targeted, the specific skills being taught, availability of funding and training personnel, time considerations, and the composition of human resources present within the organization.

In other words, an organization may have managers, supervisors, or other personnel within the organization who are capable of performing assessments to determine training needs, and training expertise and resources available to carry out and follow through with programs of training. But, whether training is done within the organization or contracted outside of the organization, the same premises for success exist.

Training involves learning. Learning involves instruction. Instruction inevitably involves the use of delivery methods. Much of the training dialogue centers on instructional techniques. Options in delivery systems include "traditional classroom, multimedia classroom, tutored video classroom, interactive TV classroom, self-study, guided learning center, computer-based training, and interactive videodisc with personal computer" (Carnevale, Gainer, and Meltzer, 1990, p. 614). All methods of delivery

possess strengths and weaknesses; but, optimally, whichever method is chosen, the desired outcome is for learners to achieve high retention rates on presented material/information cost-effectively.

Traditional classroom situations usually consist of learners seated in a room with an instructor(s) teaching using audio/visual aids such as flip charts, overhead projectors and transparencies, chalkboards, etc. Instructional methods include lecture, discussion method, and small group teaching (Cooper, 1988). Multimedia classrooms include situations maximizing a wide variety of learning media such as "films, tapes (audio or visual), slides, print, and radio" (Carnevale et al., 1990, p. 615). Interactive television techniques involve the use of "broadcast video to deliver instruction to the learner allowing contact between instructors and learners who are geographically dispersed" (Carnevale et al., p. 616). Self-study is described by the authors as the use of "a package of printed material that includes readings, exercises, and tests for self-evaluation" (Carnevale et al., p. 616). Guided learning centers offer the advantage of being individualized with the learner being self-paced. In this situation, learners go through the learning process by themselves, with instructors or facilitators interdispersed throughout the process, when and if needed. "A range of instructional materials are used such as print, audio-visual aids, and computer" (Carnevale et al., 1990, p. 617). This type of instruction can be expensive. Computer-based training involves the interaction of a learner with a computer program. The program "presents subject matter, allows for practice exercises, gives feedback, analyzes performance, and provides assistance as

needed" (Carnevale et al., 1990, p. 617). Interactive video disc technology combines the advantages of video and computer-assisted training and gives the user options or choices during the learning experience. The authors report that these systems are extremely flexible and highly interactive for the user.

In addition to training or instructional delivery systems, training methodology must also be considered. Taking into account the desired learning outcomes, allows trainers to determine which methodology provides the best fit for a situation. Carnevale et al. (1990) offer several possible options including "task force exercises, case studies, simulations and games, role playing, group discussion, individual exercises, presentations and lectures, behavior modeling, and written exercises" (p. 620).

In addition to consideration of delivery systems for training, Noe (1999) reports that training for the future must address "ways to create intellectual capital [which] includes basic skills (skills needed to perform one's job), advanced skills (such as how to use technology to share information with other employees), an understanding of the customer or manufacturing system, and self-motivated creativity)" (p. 4). Employees will need to be able to transfer knowledge creatively and truly develop understanding.

Noe (1999) refers to this broader perspective of training as high-leverage training. It is linked to strategic business goals and objectives (outputs) and uses instructional design as a model. Further, Noe (1999) contends that future training programs need to embrace continuous learning, i.e., "understanding the entire work system including relationships among their jobs, their work units, and the company . . . similar to system

understanding" (p. 4) and buy into the notion of becoming learning organizations. "A learning organization is one whose employees are continuously attempting to learn new things and apply what they have learned to improve product or service quality" (p. 5). Noe's comments concerning future training reinforce the theoretical underpinnings adopted throughout the current study--systems theory as the appropriate lens through which to view training, specifically communication training.

Communication Training and Development

Communication training and development addresses the "single common thread that crosses boundaries between organizations and job needs: the ability to communicate effectively" (Arnold & McClure, 1989, p. 2). The focus of communication training and development is to help organizational members learn how to communicate better with each other. Communication and training and development each represent unique fields. And, as Arnold and McClure (1989) suggest, communication and training and development are related in two ways. First, communication is the medium through which all skills and information are delivered. Second, communication is seen as a skill that individuals of all professions and occupations need in order to function effectively.

Close ties exist between communication skills and training. Hunt (1989) suggests that "organizations can develop training programs to give the individual expertise in a particular task" (p. 10) and that communication skills "play a vital role in developing task

expertise" (p. 10). Effective communication skills help the trainer "explain methods and techniques clearly" (Hunt, 1989, p. 10) and help the trainees "understand and apply" (p. 10) what has been heard.

Moreover, "training and good communication go hand in hand" (Hunt, 1989, p. 312). Hunt believes that one improves one's communication skills through training and that this training affects trainees personally as well as professionally, and rightfully so. This holds true whether training is directed toward personal areas or work related areas. Further, the authors explain that training should exemplify good communication principles itself. For example, information concerning training programs should be well communicated and widely posted and the training should be tailored to the particular audience. Training should be communicated clearly in order to achieve understanding and followed up by "continual feedback and monitoring" (Hunt, 1989, p. 312).

D'Aprix (1996) refers to a Price Waterhouse study (Dauphinais and Bailey, 1994) which analyzed success in re-engineering efforts among companies. Results of the study indicated that 100 percent cited good communication as a factor that helped them achieve their goals (p. 128). Communication rises to the forefront again in the same article describing a study by the Families and Work Institute which surveyed some 3,000 workers of major companies (Shellenbarger, 1993) to assess company loyalty. This study revealed that most workers felt more loyal to their jobs than their employers. D'Aprix contends that this may be due to the fallout from downsizing and re-engineering efforts. However, the study did show that employees placed the "highest value on the quality of their work

environment . . . In fact, the single thing they considered the most valuable in looking for an employer was open communication in the workplace--two thirds cited that value as very important" (p. 146). D'Aprix then argues that ". . . good communication practices are as important as any of the other job priorities people face, and we have to give people whatever skills training they lack" (pp. 149-150).

Hunt (1989) paraphrases Mark Twain when attempting to define communication by saying that everybody talks about communication, but nobody does anything about it. "Although it is one of the most basic of human processes, communication is also one of the most misunderstood. Hunt cites definitions by Jurgen Ruesch and Gregory Bateson (1956) and George Miller (1951) stressing that the three main ideas to keep in mind are: "(1) communication involves the creation of meaning in the listener, (2) communication involves the transfer of information, and (3) communication involves thousands of potential stimuli" (p. 29). Hunt succinctly explains three models of communication. He first notes the Schramm model with an "emphasis on frames of reference" (p. 30). The second model involves one-way phenomenon or a linear perspective and was designed by Shannon & Weaver. Third, Hunt describes the Sanford, Hunt, and Bracey model containing five situational variables: (1) climate, (2) purpose, (3) communication skills (interpersonal skills), (4) intention and unintention, and (5) verbal and nonverbal elements. Hunt adds that the last model does include feedback. The author further explains that

although numerous models offer much to the field, an important way to distinguish models is by frame of reference. In this way, one can extract greater understanding from what appears to be a plethora of information.

Communication is apparent when viewed from diverse organizational perspectives including macro approaches. Macro approaches are described as those wherein the organization is seen as a global or "total structure" interacting with other organizations in its environment. Conversely, micro approaches focus more on the important units or subunits of the organization and individual approaches that take many forms. In fact, in order for macro and micro communication to be effective, communication at the individual level must first be effective. Once again, this is attributed to the dynamic, transactional, interdependent nature of communication itself--each level reciprocally building upon itself. Hunt lists many forms of individual communication including "talking to work groups, attending and interacting at meetings, writing manuals, drafting a letter, making a sales contact, arguing for a proposal, and working in a quality circle" (p. 43).

Klauss and Bass (1982) contend that communication "is basic to organization" (p. 1). The authors cite Guetzkow (1965) as reporting that communication "links the organization's members, mediates the inputs to the organization from the environment and the outputs from the organization to the environment" (p. 1). Communication has also been described as "the very essence" of organizations (Katz & Kahn, 1966, p. 223) and as Barnard (1938) suggested:

> In the exhaustive theory of organization, communication would occupy a central place, because the structure, extensiveness, and

> scope of organization are almost entirely determined by communication techniques (p. 223).

The authors conclude that the importance of communication to organizations is clear in the literature; however, the construct has been adopted by a disparate number of disciplines--each with their own specific focus--developing terminologies and technologies unique to each field of interest. Cherry (1967) and Thayer (1967) report that little attention has been given by each discipline to the others and more interdisciplinary efforts could be made by sociology, electrical engineering, linguistics, psychology, physiology, mathematics, economics, speech, marketing, and information science. In addition to the potpourri of terms and definitions, the authors express concern for the lack of intensive empirically-based communication research to enhance understanding of a phenomenon universally known to be important for organizational studies. As Thayer (1967) notes, "communication may or may not be a single phenomenon; but certainly there is no universally accepted 'concept' of communication" (p. 70). Communication becomes difficult to single out for study due to the interrelatedness it shares with other constructs studied. Rogers and Agarwala-Rogers (1976) argue that "the behavior of individuals in organizations is best understood from a communication point of view" (p. 3). From this perspective, the focus of study can be more discrete and at the same time inclusive of organizational contexts. Paradigms of choice view communication as a process not an outcome.

Klauss and Bass (1982) would add that in addition to applying a communication perspective to organizational studies, it is also important to consider who is reporting

communication outcomes. The authors support their self-designed "impact model" by citing research based on the work setting being perceived as an information environment. In this context, the authors focus attention on the focal person's (supervisor's) communication style, monitoring the variable of credibility, in order to assess effects on colleagues and outcomes. It is noted that much communication research focuses on the supervisory perspective more so than other levels of the organization. Klauss and Bass (1982) refer to work by Hanser and Muchinsky (1978) that supports this perspective wherein the latter authors found that "supervision was the most reliable information source concerning the job, compared with the task itself, co-workers, the formal organization, and personal thoughts and feelings as sources of information" (p. 155, in Klauss & Bass).

Seiler, Baudhuin, and Schuelke (1982) reflect the perspective throughout their book that "communication is essential to the existence of an organization" (p. 3). The authors identify two types of communication codes--verbal and nonverbal. Codes are defined as "arbitrary symbols we use to convey messages: letters, words, postures, and gestures" (p. 3). Communication is categorized into applications including: Listening, analyzing, feedback, information acquisition, information storage, influencing, and conflict management.

DeWine (1994) refers to communication as both the "target" and "tool" for organizational change (p. 34). She stresses the importance of communication to the organization and that a "communication failure is at least one of the basic sources underlying every organizational failure" (p. xxiii). Working as a consultant, the author

notes that clients may indicate the need to improve communication and this could mean "anything from writing clearer memos to examining dysfunctional interpersonal relationships to reworking unclear job descriptions" (p. 49). Hunt (1980) states that communication enables us to "do certain important things . . . it enables us to grow, to learn, to become aware of ourselves, and to adjust to our environment" (p. 38).

Arnold and McClure (1989) define training as, "teaching people things they need to know for their current jobs, while development means preparing them for the future" (p. 6). Training refers to teaching specific skills and takes place on several levels--informational, behavioral, and results-oriented (Arnold & McClure, 1989, p. 7). Development includes training, but goes beyond this to provide a more conceptual understanding of the why and more cognitive recognition of how certain behaviors or skills fit into the wider context of the entire organization. "Development involves a systems approach" (Arnold & McClure, 1989, p. 8).

Arnold and McClure (1989) state that "communication training and development helps employees and, through them, the entire organization" (p. 15). Thus, a framework based on general systems theory provides the foundation for the current study. Rummler (1987) presents a training model with inputs and outputs or processing and receiving systems. The processing system "converts inputs, through various process systems, into outputs . . . for every processing system, there is a receiving system . . . therefore, every output of a processing system is an input to another system" (p. 219).

Perceiving the organization as a system provides the basis for the discussion Hickson and Jennings (Herndon & Kreps (Eds). 1993) present which points to the interrelationship between the organization as a system and the communication system. Specifically, the authors report that:

> communication may be the most important feature of organizations . . . some researchers have stated that the communication system may be synonymous with the organization itself [and] it is through communication that most adaption occurs. Since the context is dynamic, the next available source of control resides in stable, reliably interpretable communication which can be managed intentionally. For this reason, a systems model and a communication model are depicted to indicate functioning of the organization (pp. 142-143).

In this vein, as early as 1938, Charles Barnard expressed that a primary responsibility of executives was the "development and maintenance of a communication system" (cited in Schockley-Zalabak, 1991, p. 7). Further, Schockley-Zalabak (1991) suggests that research since that time by numerous scholars indicates essentially that organizations are basically complex communication processes that create and change events (p. 7). This research viewing communication as key to organizational excellence spans over 50 years and links effective communication to such things as "managerial effectiveness, the integration of work units across organizational levels, characteristics of effective supervision, job and communication satisfaction, and overall organizational effectiveness" (p. 7). Thus, making the transition from an industrial society to an information society has created an increased importance in workers having the ability to communicate effectively. Schockley-Zalabak suggests that there is broad agreement that

"organizational communication plays a significant part in contributing to or detracting from organizational excellence" (Schockley-Zalabak, 1991, p. 8). And, with this emphasis on information and speed, she poses the question, "What skills and abilities will organizations need from their future employees?" (p. 8). This type of questioning concerns individuals at every level of organizational life. Identifying and honing skills needed for the future world of work has become a universal issue that every employee must address.

One approach to answering that question has been "soft skills" training. This umbrella term provides a comfortable zone for placing virtually anything other than technical (hard skills) training. In other words, everything besides computer training might be referred to by this descriptor.

Georges (1996) argues that only one set of interpersonal communication skills exists that is truly significant. This skill set is identified as "master skill." The author reports that this one skill enables individuals to "achieve a state of rapport, trust, accord, mutual commitment--the condition known in the business world as 'buy-in'" (Georges, 1996, p. 50). Soft skills training is viewed by this perspective as part of the master skill set and includes the ability to:

(1) open a conversation or interaction in a way that elicits open-mindedness,

(2) articulate goals,

(3) diagnose another person's needs and problems by listening effectively and asking good questions,

(4) demonstrating respect for the other's views,

(5) obtaining respect for your own views (advocating),

(6) raising the conversation "up" the intellectual and emotional ladder in a way that the other person is willing and able to follow (by resolving conflict, forming solutions that meet the other's needs, negotiating for change and so on),

(7) carrying the interaction all the way to "buy-in" (the other person is confident and firmly committed to the proposal; she agrees to act on it) (Georges, 1996, p. 50).

Georges contends that contrary to the beliefs of many, these skills can be mastered and are indeed measurable. Once buy-in occurs, commitment to learning the skills takes place and the end result can be measured by changes in behavior, work performance, and ultimately return on investment and the meeting of organizational goals. Based on an action learning model, wherein learning occurs from doing and repetition, Georges' approach to training focuses on setting specific goals stated in terms of results and then practicing the skills needed to achieve those results. This approach is not far removed from the practice in education, e.g., instructional design, that promotes the development of learning objectives prior to instruction and practice.

Communication Skills

> *Embedded knowledge in the organization does not just happen. You have to train people in new skills. And you have to constantly upgrade those skills.*
>
> C.K. Prahalad (In The 21st Century organization: Reinventing Through Reengineering, 1995, W. Bennis & M. Mische)

The skills of the workforce will be the competitive weapon of the 21st century.

Lester Thurow, U.S. Economist
(Executive Excellence, 1999)

The new ASTD "Trends Report" reiterates the fact that even though globalization, technology, and diversity continue to rapidly change the world of work for employers and employees at great speed, communication skills are an integral part of present and future work. Federal Reserve Board chairman Alan Greenspan, in his keynote address to the National Skills Summit, said, "Workers today must be equipped not simply with technical know-how but also with the ability to create, analyze, and transform information and to interact effectively with others" (cited in Van Buren, and Woodwell, Jr. 2000, p. 12). In this vein, "with organizations putting a premium on speed and innovation, skills such as communications, creative problem solving and working in teams are becoming more and more important" (VanBuren, and Woodwell, Jr., 2000, p. 12).

Just as skills training is a recurrent theme throughout the training literature; communication skills training is central to communication training and development. The question becomes one of identifying which skills are considered communication skills. Akin to the long-lived discussion over communication competence, Schockley-Zalaback cites the work of Vincent DiSalvo (1980), who surveyed 25 recent studies describing the need for communication skills in organizations. DiSalvo discovered a "good" communicator theme. Reminiscent of Quintilian's ideal of the "good man speaking well," the notion of communication competence has been approached by Littlejohn and Jabusch

(1982) wherein the term is defined arising out of process understanding, interpersonal sensitivity, communication skills, and ethical responsibility (cited in Schockley-Zalaback, 1991, p. 9).

From this perspective, communication skills comprise one of the four components of communication competency. The authors go on to define communication skill as "the ability to develop and interpret message strategies in specific situations" (p. 9). From this viewpoint, communication skill in the organizational context is viewed as an integral part of communication competence and is defined in the broadest sense. Questions arise as to how one develops this ability. Further, what specific behaviors in the workplace would provide evidence for effective performance of communication skill. Finally, do subsets or micro skills exist under the generic umbrella of communication skills in this context, and, if so, what are they? In other words, could there be identifiable skills that are major components of overall communication skill? The current study investigates just that issue and provides further definitions of specific elements of the communication process.

O'Hair, Friedrich, Wiemann, and Wiemann (1995) define communication skills as "behavioral routines based on social understandings and used by communicators to achieve their goals" (p. 32). Taylor, Meyer, Rosegrant, & Samples (1992) attempt to describe communication skills by first stating that they greatly impact job success in terms of effectiveness, promotions, and career satisfaction--more so than formal job training related to procedures, products, and services (p. 272). The communication skills the authors recommend for the workforce include: (1) "knowing when and how to clarify

yourself at work, (2) how to appropriately prepare and deliver reports, and (3) establishing appropriate career goals through self-awareness, study of models, and acquaintance with mentors" (p. 300). The authors also focus on the employment interview, assertiveness at work, giving and following directions, interpersonal relationships at work, intercultural communication, and gender communication (Taylor, et al. 1995, Ch. 10). Shockley-Zalabak (1991) identifies key communication skills as decision-making, problem solving, fact-finding, and presentations (p. xii). "Today's organizations need people who can listen, write, persuade others, demonstrate interpersonal skills, gather information, and exhibit small-group problem-solving expertise" (Schockley-Zalaback, 1991, p. 8).

According to Training & Development's November 1999 annual Trendz report, the office of future work will require greater proficiency with respect to technological advancements, but career success will not be decided by computer proficiency alone (Abernathy, Allerton, Barron, Galagan, & Salopek, 1999, p. 25). Career success in the new millennium will require interpersonal skills. To illustrate this point, the authors point to the PEOPLE Skills Index 2005 (trademarked by OfficeTeam, who specialize in administrative staffing with more than 200 offices internationally). The survey instrument offers a series of 15 questions designed to zero in on important interpersonal skills. The skill areas included are: (1) problem solving (organization, judgment, logic, creativity, conflict resolution), (2) ethics (diplomacy, courtesy, honesty, professionalism), (3) open-mindedness (flexibility, open to new business ideas, positive outlook), (4) persuasiveness

(excellent communication and listening skills), (5) leadership (accountability, management, and motivational skills), and (6) educational interests (continuous thirst for knowledge and skills development) (Abernathy, et al. 1999, p. 25).

Two of the 15 questions discern between verbal and written communication skills, and humor is included as a separate item. The self-administered test is designed to provide some gauge of interpersonal abilities or people skills. Designers of the instrument refer to these skills as soft skills and a low score indicates the need for concentrated efforts in these skill areas. Interestingly, the test recommendations include the following language, "your interpersonal and communication skills may need work" (Abernathy, et al. 1999, p. 28). Does this imply that interpersonal skills and communication skills are two different skill sets? How does one differentiate an interpersonal skill from a communication skill? Conversely, are interpersonal and communication skills reciprocal in nature? Communication and listening skills are also separately identified. Are listening skills not communication skills? And, would listening skills be considered interpersonal skills or communication skills?

These questions are provoked by findings in the literature, i.e. the PEOPLE Skills Index 2005, that lack definitional consistency. Items are loosely constructed and the meanings are vague. Although this instrument would not be considered scholarly, it does provide an example of the incongruence of terms, definitions, and overall confusion plaguing the constructs mentioned.

In sum, communication levels and contexts are more easily discernable in an analysis of the literature than extracting "communication skills training." Interpretations of communication skills, if skills are even specifically mentioned, paint a broad stroke of items with little cohesiveness as illustrated in the following paragraphs.

More than two decades ago, scholars were researching and reporting on the effects of communication and communication skills in the workplace. Murry's (1976) study involving a sample of public administrators revealed that of eight rank-ordered skills deemed important to effectiveness in public service work, oral and written communication skills received the top ranking. Numerous other studies concur with these results, including Carlson (1951), Burns (1954), Goetzinger & Valentine (1962), Lawler, Porter, & Tennenbaum (1968), Lee & Lee (1956), Mintzberg (1973), and Underwood (1963).

Tracey (1984) suggests that communication training is provided to improve skills of employees at all levels of the organization in "generating, transmitting, and receiving information" (p. 11). Specifically, employees read, listen, write, and speak in order to communicate. The communication goal becomes one of avoiding misunderstanding while eliciting the desired responses or actions.

Tracey (1984) underscores the basics of communication training by outlining the essential conditions for communication training demands including "small group instruction, attention to individual needs and differences, job context training, informal setting, adequate time for skills development, long-term application of skills under supervision, and adequate feedback" (p. 11). The context for such training varies with the

mode of communication taught. For example, the spoken communication mode involves "organizing facts for expository, logical, and persuasive communication, planning and preparing a presentation, using communication aids, using delivery techniques, and handling questions" (Tracey, 1984, p. 11).

Tracey (1984) provides several examples of written communication including "organizing facts; writing clearly, concisely, and directly; using verbs, avoiding jargon, cliches, and euphemisms; using emphasis, parallelism, and transitions; using format, appearance, and layout; using graphics; editing for clarity and conciseness, logic and flow; and grammar and punctuation" (p. 11). Reading communication includes "development of fixation skills; avoidance of regression, vocalization, and subvocalization; reading for the main idea; using organizational patterns in printed materials; skimming and scanning techniques; evaluative reading; and techniques for remembering what is read" (p. 11).

In response to reading as a communication skill, Axley (1996) conducted a study involving surveying 164 experienced "communication consultants" (p. 193). Among the many questions asked, the primary question addressed what these individuals considered to be the "hot" areas in communication for the future. The survey responses indicated that the number one area (32%) was reported as "basic communication skills" (speaking and writing). Respondents added that this area would "always be hot" (p. 193). Computer training and information processing came in at 29% or second place. Axley reports that

the "plain old communication skills of tradition, speaking and writing" ranked first, but that no one mentioned "listening, reading, or interpreting" (p. 193). The author considers this to be a grave oversight.

Listening communication also encompasses several facets such as the "role of listening on the job; how to listen actively; listening for meaning and intent; listening aggressively; nonevaluative and evaluative listening; differentiating context and delivery; avoiding defensive listening; and developing and applying listening skills" (Tracey, 1984, p. 11). The author suggests that whichever communication mode is being addressed, many times appropriate strategies and techniques include, but are not limited to, small group seminars and workshops.

Portnoy's (1986) view of communication and "basic communication skills" is projected from a leadership point of view. He argues that leaders need "basic communication skills [including] conversation, assertiveness, confrontation, feedback, and dealing with criticism" (pp. 82-99). This paper will not discuss his major concepts underlying these skills (e.g., superego, id). However, Portnoy (1986) emphasizes silence and reflective listening as effective tools for leaders (p. 82).

Then, in 1989, McLagan, under the auspices of ASTD, produced the practitioner's guide to HRD work, The Models. Competencies are defined as "knowledge and skills." A listing shows the four categories of competencies needed by those who engage in HRD work: (1) technical, (2) business, (3) interpersonal, and (4) intellectual. These

competencies relate directly to outputs as discussed earlier. Staying within the context of this paper, only interpersonal skills will be further defined.

McLagan (1989) reports that interpersonal competencies "have a strong communication base" (p. 45). Eight skills comprise the category of interpersonal competencies:

1. Coaching skill: helping individuals recognize and understand personal needs, values, problems, alternatives, and goals;

2. Feedback skill: communicating information, opinions, observations, and conclusions so that they are understood and can be acted on;

3. Group process skill: influencing groups so that tasks, relationships, and individual needs are addressed;

4. Negotiation skill: securing win-win agreements while successfully representing a special interest in a decision;

5. Presentation skill: presenting information orally so that an intended purpose is achieved;

6. Questioning skill: gathering information from stimulating insight in individuals and groups through use of interviews, questionnaires, and other probing methods;

7. Relationship building skill: establishing relationships and networks across a broad range of people and groups;

8. Writing skill: preparing written material that follows generally accepted rules of style and form, is appropriate for the audience, is creative, and accomplishes its intended purpose (McLagan, 1999, p. 45).

Since the author explicitly states that these interpersonal competencies have a "strong communication base," the reader might assume that these are communication-

based competencies (knowledge and skills). The eight skills obviously have much to do with communication in the broadest sense. Again, specificity of types of communication skills is lacking, e.g. verbal and nonverbal distinctions. Inherently, as evidenced in other parts of the literature, there also is no mention of perceived importance of these skills by the author. In other words, what relationship, if any, exists among these eight skills? And, which of these skills, if ranked, would rank highest among the others? In the author's defense, at least a legitimate attempt has been made to identify communication-related (interpersonal) competencies in the context of HRD work. The eight skills defined do shed some light on communication inputs.

Carnevale et al., Gainer, & Meltzer (1990) refer to skills needed by employees, especially in today's global, demographically-changing, high tech environment, as "basic workplace skills" (p. 1). These are described as the most basic, but essential job-related skills needed in order to keep pace in the fast-paced work climate of the 1990s and into the millennium. In addition to competence with the three R's, which the authors report have been reportedly "the first deficiencies to be clearly seen in the workplace" (p. 1), other skills have shown up in short supply simultaneously. These skills include "problem solving, listening, negotiating, and knowing how to learn" (pp. 1-2).

Largely, in part, due to economic concerns, employers are beginning to understand the need to "upskill" (Carnevale et al., 1990, p. 2) workers in a broader range of areas focusing on more than the needed skill of the moment type of solutions. For example, Carnevale et al. (1990) report that as employers see skill deficiencies affecting the bottom-

line, those employers will respond with training or replacement. The latter option, however, has been affected by a shrinking supply of workers which compels employers to lean toward training. The authors refer to this phenomenon as the "making" of productive employees versus the "buying" (p. 2) of employees. Thus, for economic, technological, demographic, and practical considerations, employers show interest in providing training, and this trend is growing (Carnevale et al., 1990, p. 2).

A simultaneously growing interest on the part of workers also can be evidenced as workers feel the effects and challenges of a rapidly changing work environment and an ever-shrinking world. Carnevale et al. (1990) contend that employees literally "feel the ground under them shifting as the range of skills needed for successful participation in this economy expands" (p. 2). More is expected from employees than ever before in a wide array of tasks and concern for career growth compels the employee to be receptive to training opportunities in important areas affecting their position in the marketplace.

One example of the demands placed on today's employees is one-stop shopping for financial services (Carnevale et al., et al. 1990). This industry is undergoing a transition in customer-service philosophy and demanding that "traditional institutional and professional specialties give way to a one-stop shopping approach for financial services" (p. 2). The one-stop career centers provide another example of how different services traditionally were housed within different departments with specific tasks. Now, under one roof, the same services (with the benefit of technology) can be provided as long as

employees develop the skills necessary to carry out a wider variety of tasks and responsibilities. Obviously, the one-stop approach has advantages and disadvantages with the primary goal being customer convenience.

The jury is still out on these one-stop shopping approaches to providing customer service and the results of those studies are left for future papers. However, greater customer convenience and satisfaction are achieved by this approach, assuming that the time, expense, and efforts required of employer and employee are worthwhile. It makes sense to believe that interpersonal skills, and overall, a broader range of skills will be necessary. Carnevale et al. (1990) identify more specifically what those skills are in the section entitled, "The Skills Employers Want" (p. 3). "Learning how to learn is the most basic of all skills because it is the key to lifelong learning" (p. 3). "Equipped with this skill, a person can achieve competence in all other basic workplace skills . . . without this skill, the learning process is difficult and frequently inefficient. . ." (p. 3). Reading, writing, and computation are noted as being fundamental to success. Other "essential communication tools" (p. 4) include listening and oral communication because most of the work day is spent in some type of interaction (written or oral). "Job success is strongly linked to good communication skills. In fact, recent studies indicate that only job knowledge ranks above communication skills as a factor in workplace success" (p. 4).

Carnevale et al. (1990) suggest that along with communication skills and knowledge skills, it is important to emphasize creative thinking and problem solving. "An organization's achievement of its strategic objectives often depends on how quickly and

effectively it can transcend barriers to improved productivity and competitiveness. These pressures put creative thinking and problem solving at a premium on all organizational levels" (p. 4). The authors explain that:

> Problem-solving skills include the ability to recognize and define problems, to invent and implement solutions, and to track and evaluate results. Cognitive skills, group interaction skills, and information-processing skills are all crucial to successful problem solving. Creative thinking in the workplace generally relates to creative problem solving or innovative processing" (p. 4.)

They further stress that when organizations are resolving problems and not allowing dysfunctional relations to set in, creative solutions will help them reach their goals. Other skills requiring increased training include "self-esteem, motivation, goal setting, and employability/career development" (p. 4). The individual skills tie together, as illustrated by Carnevale et al., when they note that "individual effectiveness in the workplace can be linked directly to positive self-esteem and motivation" (p. 4). There are many ways to improve self-esteem. Typically, these endeavors will involve the employer and the employee taking responsibility for training or educational practices to improve this skill. Many programs include goal-setting, meeting expected deadlines, focusing on career development, efficiently integrating new technologies and/or processes, and engaging in creative thinking. Thus, employees have increased value in the marketplace with skills employers value.

The authors note that negotiation and teamwork are additional interpersonal skills that add value to working relationships. "In the past two decades, the use of teams in the workplace has increased markedly because the team approach has been linked conclusively

to higher productivity and product quality, as well as to improved quality of work life. . .change strategies usually depend on the ability of employees to pull together and refocus on a new common goal" (Carnevale et al., 1990, p. 5). Finally, the authors conclude their discussion of skills by adding that organizational effectiveness also ranks highly. Clearly, it is valuable for employees to have some understanding of the internal and external forces and workings of organizations in helping them reach their goals successfully. However, in order for that to occur, the working relationships, the internal hierarchy (albeit participative or not, implicit leadership or explicit), and culture of the organization need also to be recognized and understood. "Organizational effectiveness and leadership skill . . . are now basic ingredients for all workers up and down the organizational hierarchy" (p. 5).

Carnevale et al. (1990) emphasize the need for strong interpersonal skills in order to face an America beset with "technological changes, the need for innovation, and a sense of heightened competition" (p. 2). Management responds to these challenges historically by applying new leadership methodologies or management philosophies, e.g., participative management. The employee's ability to adapt to new strategies, e.g., collaborations, work teams, teamwork, and at the same time retain customer and product quality efforts will be crucial not only to the individual employee, but also for the workplace on small and larger scales. Thus, the ripple effect is referred to countless times in systems theory.

"The communication skills of individual members--perception, listening, planning, organizing, and presenting--are all essential to the organization" (Hunt, 1980, p. 8).

Communication and communication skills of numerous varieties are seen at all levels of the organization in many forms. Hunt illustrates that communication plays an active role in many forms in affecting different perspectives (macro approach, micro approach, and individual approach).

Hunt (1980) identifies five types of communication skills that enable the individual to participate effectively in the daily operations of organizations. These communication behaviors include: Interpersonal communication, small group skills, leadership skills, public communication, and written communication (pp. 22-23). He gives specific attention and reports research related to the categories of listening, interviewing, participating in small groups, and supervising. Writing is noted as a communication skill as well (p. xv). Forms of written communication include reports, proposals, memoranda, correspondence, manuals, newsletters, resumes, and cover letters (Hunt, p. 292). An additional category explains presentational communication (oral presentations) and the purposes and make-up of each type.

Jones (1991) reiterates the apparent importance of written communication skills, based on his survey findings from 598 organizational participants who rated job skills of professional and managerial new hires as relatively strong. The results indicated:

> Written communication skills stand out as an area in which three out of ten new hires show inadequate skills. In fact, the ability to communicate effectively in writing was reported as the single greatest area of deficiency for all occupational areas (p. 9).

The study was conducted in response to Workforce 2000 issues focusing on skills needed in the workplace. Jones (1991) also reported that, although participants in the

study rated new hire skills as relatively strong, only 41% of participating organizations reported that the "skill levels of job applicants are keeping pace with job demands" (Jones, 1991, p. 9).

Overall, the greatest skill deficiencies were reported in the areas of reading, math, writing, problem solving, and work motivation (Jones, 1991, p. 10). Clearly, these skills are indicative of communication-related skill areas mentioned widely throughout the literature and in this paper. In each of these cases, as well as other instances, "communication skills play an important role in the development and growth of human resources" (Jones, 1991, p. 12).

Schockley-Zalabak (1991) offers descriptions of communication skills specific for group situations. The 16 skills include initiating, questioning, interpreting, suggesting, facilitating, evaluating, giving feedback, clarifying, summarizing, terminating, active listening, confronting, positive blocking, modeling, reflecting feelings and supporting, and empathizing (Table 6.1, p. 204). Whether groups consist of primary work teams or small problem-solving teams, formal or informal, the key to effectiveness of groups and successful outcomes depends largely upon the communication skills of its members. Competency or lack of competency in these 16 key areas of group communication inevitably leads to positive or negative group outcomes.

Group communication skills include "organizing, analyzing, presenting, harmonizing, coaching, and summarizing" (Hunt, 1980, pp. 148-149). Organizing skills "deal with planning, arrangement, timing, and detail" (p. 148). Analyzing skills "involve

the ability to dissect, focus, and direct an issue under consideration" (p. 148) by members of groups. Presenting skills involve tasks where group members are "called upon to report to appropriate bodies and agencies and/or articulate a position to other members" (p. 148). Harmonizing skills are used when group members aid in promoting harmony and compromise that is "based on what is best for the group" (p. 148). Coaching skills include behaviors that "help other members" (p. 148). Examples of coaching include orienting, encouraging participation, improving the climate, and training. Hunt adds that the coach may many times be "behind the scenes, and not necessarily the 'star' of the group" (p. 149). Summarizing skills are evident when a group member attempts to "recap group deliberations" (p. 149). There are two types of summarizing: (1) Internal summaries--restating, concluding and recapitulating what the group has decided, and (2) final summaries--last major recap of the group's discussions (p. 149).

Hunt (1989) further adds that "listening is the most important of all the communication skills" (p. 63). He devotes an entire chapter to this skill and reports research to support his claims. As early as 1926, Rankin's work estimated that 45 percent of our routine communication consists of listening, 30 percent of speaking, 16 percent of reading, and 9 percent of writing. Dover's (1958) 18-month study at Swift and Company reported that managers considered the ability to listen the most helpful in understanding employee attitudes and morale (p. 63). Consistent with this study, Hunt cites a study around 1980 where business leaders were asked what skills were most looked for in college graduates seeking employment. Nearly 80 percent of those surveyed placed

listening skills among their top five choices. A majority felt that listening was the most important skill for a potential employee (p. 63). Seiler, Baudhuin, and Schuelke (1982) add that the two most important variables in the communication process are "listening (receiving) and feedback (responding) to others" (p. 135). The authors strongly emphasize receiving, interpreting, understanding, and responding to verbal and nonverbal messages from clients and peers in order to achieve overall success. They also add that, without listening skills, little understanding will occur between and among those participating in the communication event.

Hunt (1989) contends that listening is "one of those neglected arts in communication, but we must keep reminding ourselves that it is one of those keys to communicative success" (p. 77). Sypher, Bostram and Seibert (cited in DeWine, 1994), concluded in their 1989 study that "listening is related to other communication abilities and to success at work" (p. 141). Further, "better listeners (as measured by a listening comprehension test) held higher level positions and were promoted more often than those with less-developed listening abilities" (p. 141).

In this vein, Stauffer (1998) reports that with the emphasis today placed on team environments, "good listening skills are perhaps more vital than ever for effective management, however listening is the least-taught communication skill" (p. 1). He further states that probably just about everyone could use a refresher course in listening, but that does not appear to be what is happening (in his opinion).

Hunt (1989) cites Seth Fessenden's (1955) seven levels of listening as "isolation, identification, integration, inspection, interpolation, and introspection" (p. 88) illustrating that listening is a participatory activity. This paradigm of listening infers that listening, like all communication, is hard work for senders and receivers alike. "You will be successful in formulating an appropriate response only after you have demonstrated good listening behavior" (Hunt, p. 93). Hunt further states that "once you have mastered the skills of good listening, you will have no trouble with the other skills...Listening is the foundation of effective communication . . . a more important communication skill than talking and writing" (p. 95). The author concludes that, as communicators, one spends much more time on the receiving end than on the sending end of communication transactions.

Johnson (1996, in Galvin & Cooper, Eds.) refers to a statement by James Boswell which in essence states that "talking isn't everything. . . . It's only half of a communication skill--the other half is listening" (p. 91). Research indicates that, actually, probably more than half of our time is devoted to listening (Rankin, 1976; Barker et al., 1981; Steil, 1991). Thus, listening is the least taught but most used skill in terms of communication time (Johnson, 1996, p. 91).

Hunt and Cusella (1989) co-authored a study in which high-level managers in Fortune 500 companies were asked to rank order listening skills by degree of importance for managerial success. Granted, all skills can be crucial to communication success, but the following 17 were ranked as most important in the study: (1) giving feedback, (2) asking questions, (3) giving instructions, (4) building rapport, (5) taking instructions, (6)

developing objectivity, (7) developing empathy, (8) getting the genuine message, (9) learning to summarize orally, (10) giving criticism, (11) taking criticism, (12) reading feedback, (13) improving concentration, (14) developing comprehension, (15) improving recall, (16) body language, and (17) note taking (Hunt, 1989, p. 94).

Stewart (1986) cites Nichol's (1980) book stating that our total communication efforts rely on four basic skills: reading, writing, speaking, and listening. The emphasis on listening refers to studies done in the 1980's including work by Madelyn Burley-Allen (1988) who studied Fortune 1000 presidents. Results indicated that:

> the two most anxiety-producing work situations for top management were the failure of employees to accept and/or carry out responsibilities, and the failure of managers to receive critical information. Both problem areas imply inadequate listening skills (as cited in Stewart, 1986, p. 29).

Stewart gives an example of the estimated cost of not listening to American business: "if each of the hundred million or more American workers made one small five-dollar mistake per year because of poor listening, the annual cost would be half a billion dollars" (p. 29). A study of 100 business and industrial organizations revealed that "listening seems to be less effective the further down the organizational chart one goes . . . indicating room for improvement of managerial listening skills, but especially a high need for managers to train employees in more effective listening" (p. 29). Nichols reports that "the amount of formal training we receive in each of the four basic communication skills

(reading, writing, speaking, listening) is in inverse proportion to the amount we use the skill in actual practice" (in Stewart, 1986, p. 29). These communication areas, percentage of use, and formal training typically provided include:

Skill	Of Total Communications, % of Use in Practice	Formal Training in Skill
Writing	9%	8-12 years (or more)
Reading	16%	6-8 years (or more)
Speaking	35%	1-2 years (or more)
Listening	40%	0-1/2 year (or more)

Stewart (1986) defines interpersonal skills as "skills that allow an individual to interact successfully with other people . . . to include assertiveness, listening, complimenting, giving feedback, confronting, and supporting" (p. 283). Communication plays an integral part in the design of many assessments he provides for managers and employees. For example, the author describes delegating as the "ultimate" managerial skill. He reinforces the importance of communication delegating and effectiveness by including four items out of ten on the "Delegating Skills Assessment" (p. 81). Clear communication, coaching, providing follow-up and giving feedback are four of the items assessed. In addition, Stewart suggests that, whenever possible, things should be put into writing to ensure clarification.

Anderson (cited in Towers, 1992) focuses on group tasks in organizations as they address the issue of skills and communication. He contends that organizations are likely to emphasize the following:

(1) social skills (friendliness, cooperation, getting on with others),

(2) influencing skills, (assertiveness, resolving conflict, persuasion),

(3) communication skills (clear expression, use of forceful argument, summarizing skills),

(4) intellectual skills (applying knowledge and past experience, thinking analytically and logically, evaluating the arguments of others),

(5) attitudes (political, economic, racial, views towards business, government, authority), and

(6) personality (role adopted in group situations, level of activity in group, leadership qualities exhibited)" (p. 180).

The author adds that "good communication has been accepted as an undeniable touchstone of the effective management of employee relations throughout the living memory of all managers" (Anderson, 1992, p. 220).

Thus, communication and communication skills are well-supported throughout the literature as vital to organizational systems. Communication training is a critical link in the chain connecting inputs (communication) to outputs (organizational goals). And, Stewart (1986) adds that communication is a "trainable" skill if the "intent to communicate" (p. 168) is present. Honest, open communication provides the starting point to improve work-related skills such as coaching and team-building. This provides the basis for

creating "an atmosphere of trust" (p. 168) where honest communication flows. The literature repeatedly points to the importance of communication training in organizational systems. The challenge lies in determining the compositional make-up of this construct.

Theoretical Framework

"Theories are nets cast to catch what we call 'the world': to rationalize, to explain, and master it. . . . We endeavor to make the mesh ever finer and finer" (Popper, 1959, p. 59). Klauss and Bass (1982) add that it is instructive to draw from organization theory in order to understand communication in organizations (p. 9). Four categories of organization theory are distinguished by the authors: "classical theory; neoclassical, human relations approach; behavioral decision theory; and open systems theory" (p. 9).

Systems are driven by feedback received. Rummler (1987) identifies two primary levels of feedback--Loop I and Loop II. Loop I measures output against internal criteria and Loop II measures against receiving system criteria. "If the processing system and receiving system are in fact operating as a total system, the processing system will respond to both feedback loops and will alter its output accordingly" (p. 218).

Understanding that organizations function as systems "is key to analyzing individual and organization performance and determining training needs" (Rummler, 1987, p. 220). Rummler (1987) reports that systems operate in organizations in the following manner:

1. Organizations function as processing systems, converting inputs (orders, materials, labor, capital, technology, etc.) through various subsystems (functions, departments) to produce valued outputs (products or services) for a marketplace or constituency (receiving system).

2. The processing system and organization responds to various levels of feedback: (I) self-evaluation against internal criteria for product quality, cost, etc., and (II) evaluation by the marketplace or constituency. Ultimately, all organizations respond or adapt to their receiving system. They respond or they disappear.

3. All the subsystems (i.e., functions, departments) support the basic organizational process of converting inputs into outputs. The subsystems have basic processing systems--receiving system relationships with each other (e.g., R&D and manufacturing, manufacturing and sales) and likewise respond to the two primary sources of feedback. As the total organization adapts to the changing requirements of its marketplace or constituency, the subsystems must adapt to the changing requirements of the organization (Rummler, p. 220).

Training outputs are only successful when needs inputs are carefully assessed. Systems also can be perceived as individuals, groups, and organizations. Communication is perceived as the system that helps or hinders organizations. Communication has been described as "the very essence" of organizations" (Katz & Kahn, 1966, p. 223). The openness of systems to their environments and the interrelatedness of subsystems within suprasystems will greatly affect outcomes as well. Feedback is critical to the process and is the common theme woven throughout the literature. For example, feedback is characteristic to the basic communication model, a feature of the systems view, and

appears in the instructional communication and education literature modeling the teacher/student learning transaction as well as models of instructional design used for program planning and employee training.

The current study assumes that systems theory, derived from applicable bodies of work (i.e., communication, education, training and development, management, human resource development), provides the best perspective to view communication training and development in organizations. Essentially, systems approaches provide organizations with a means of "outlining the skill levels that currently exist and those that will be required in the future" (McClelland, 1992, p. 53). Additionally, a systems approach can provide the basis by which "training needs can be efficiently defined and addressed cost-effectively" (McClelland, p. 53).

In this way, communication fits into an organizational context as process and content. Effective communication is seen as the glue that holds organizations intact or a possible barrier to organizational cohesiveness. Communication skills are viewed as essential tools used by each employee within the system that can positively or negatively affect organizational outcomes. This speaks to the research question posed in this study that addresses communication training on the importance criterion.

Essentially, communication is viewed as the target and tool of training and development (DeWine, 1994, p. 37). Jacobs (1987) stated it well when he said that "the

uniqueness of the training and development profession lies in its role of helping people improve their performance using all aspects of the work environment and systems to make these improvements occur" (p. 1).

Rationale for Theoretical Framework

> *Training professionals must develop ways to capture and share knowledge systematically as work occurs and changes.*
> Bassi, L. J., Benson, G., & Cheney, S. (1997 ASTD Trend Report)

The theoretical framework for this study, systems theory, mirrors one of the major competencies outlined by ASTD Models for Human Performance Improvement: Roles, Competencies, and Outputs (ASTD, 1996):

> Systems thinking and understanding [is] identifying the inputs, through-puts, and outputs of a subsystem, system, or supra-system and applying that information to improve human performance; realizing the implications of interventions on many parts of an organization, a process, or an individual; [and] taking steps to address the side effects of human performance improvement interventions (p. 10).

Key inputs identified in this study are communication skill training items. Further, the study investigates perceptions of importance on these communication items and other items volunteered by respondents. In line with systems thinking, better quantifying the inputs leads systematically to better outputs for the organizational system.

In the words of Rothwell and Sredl (1992), "In a systems approach, each person's job is seen not only as an activity in itself, but also as one part of the organizational plan . . . certain skills fit into the wider text of the entire organization" (p. 8). The assumption is that better classification and description of jobs and/or skills would more adequately equip the organization to achieve healthy outcomes.

Assuming that communication can be critical to organizational health (affect outputs), the premise for this study is based on the idea that since feedback is vital to the training loop (as an organizational system), then determining appropriate and specific input variables would be an important part of maintaining that system in a healthy manner (in terms of organizational outputs, goals). In other words, the organization as a system should work more effectively (produce better outputs) with high quality inputs, which in turn are recognized as feedback in the loop (Rummler, 1987, p. 220). Simply put, this means that in Rummler's view the primary objective of training is to "improve individual and organization performance" (p. 218). And, the goal of the training professional is to "have the training input impact the performance output of the trainee" (Rummler, p. 218).

One significant outcome of this study could be identification of more specific and meaningful terms describing communication training skills. Falling in line with standard training models wherein needs assessment is key, this information might have some utility by attempting to more closely tap into business and industry training needs. At the very

least, some type of convergence on the specific composition of communication training (skill) might be reached. Complete consensus on these definitional issues is not the focus of this study and will be left for others to conquer.

Overall, the training literature supports the notion that many organizations like the idea of having training programs tailored to their specific needs. Part of the training model indicates that a thorough needs assessment is critical to this process. Also, practitioners know that any one type of training program, communication skills or otherwise, will not fit every organization's perceived needs. The "one size fits all" concept does not apply here. Therefore, this study takes preliminary steps to address perceived gaps in the literature and among practitioners wherein little agreement exists on the real nature or composition of communication training and development.

Diversity in the Workplace and Communication Training

The changes in composition of the workforce in the 21st century (e.g., the graying of America, diversity, more women in the workforce), will not be discussed again in detail. However, there is much written about these issues. It stands to reason that communication and communication training may be interwoven into the mix.

The assumption could be made that diversity of the workforce has direct implications for communication skills training and development. This includes all aspects of a diverse group. However, gender and communication receive much attention in the literature to date.

Interestingly, not all research points to gender differences. For example, the training staff at Training magazine wrote a commentary on John Gray's book touting that, Men are from Mars and Women are from Venus. Brant Burleson, a Professor of Communication at Purdue University concludes that the entire premise of that book is "a fallacy" concerning women and men and communication problems (Training Staff, 1997, p. 1).

There is considerable research concerning gender and communication as related to the workplace (e.g., Bartok, 1978; Bartol & Workman, 1976; Gayle, 1991; Interlude & Powell, 1979; Miner, 1974; Szilagyi, 1980; Day & Stogdill, 1972; Lee & Alvares, 1977; Baird & Bradley, 1979; Bartok & Butterfield, 1976; Haccoun, Sallay, & Haccoun, 1978; and Welsh, 1979 as cited in Pearson, West, & Turner, 1995). "The workforce is no longer male-dominated . . . communication within organizations is changing as a result" (Taylor, Meyer, Rosegrant, & Samples, 1992, p. 283). Taylor, et al. (1992) go on to say that as men and women discover the value of androgynous management, "everyone will need to learn communication skills that traditionally [were considered] feminine communication skills: behavior that is cooperative, supportive, and nurturant" (p. 283).

Lee (1994) refers to this phenomenon as the "feminization of management," reporting that between 1979 and 1982, the rate at which women entered the workforce doubled and that "between 1982 and 1992, the percentage of women in executive positions rose from 21.7% to 30%" (p. 1). The author contends that this has led to a modification in managerial qualities indicating more emphasis on "influencing, nurturing

and collaborating to support empowerment and teamwork efforts" (p. 1). Essentially, "women are far from catching up with men in the workplace, but their leadership style is making an impact, with more emphasis on persuasion, cooperation, and collectivism" (Lee, 1994, p. 1).

Hoy (1990) addresses the debate about how women managers and executives learn. She contends that women "are more concerned about relationships than men [and] seem to be better at developing them and at communicating--both verbally and nonverbally" (p. 2). Hoy refers to the work of Lawrence Kohlberg, reporting that differences occur on levels of decision-making between females and males with "females continually scoring at inferior levels" (p. 2).

Sheeler (1997) analyzes the literature on the interrelationship of communicator style and gender in the organizational setting. The author addresses prototype in relation to issues such as leadership, the cultural/diversity model and the gender gap (p. 1). Five propositions are developed, based on Pavitt's (1989) framework, that expand the model to the realm of organizational communication.

Research also has been conducted by Sells, Goodyear, Lichtenberg, and Polkinghorne (1997) addressing verbal behavior. The researchers investigate the effects of supervisor and trainee gender on verbal interactions and on perceptions of trainee skill levels (p. 1). Results, based on 44 supervision dyads showed that "supervisors paired with male trainees exhibited more task-oriented discourse than did other configurations" (p. 1). London (1995) also addresses female/male self-perceptions and self-disclosure behaviors

between same gender and different gender dyads. The male/female supervisor-subordinate groups reported higher self-disclosure (p. 98). And, "females disclose more about themselves to others than do males" (Taylor, 1979, p. 127, Rosenfeld, Civikly, & Herron, 1979, as cited in London, M., 1995, p. 98).

Pearson and Nelson (2000) offer an informative discussion about gender and self-disclosure and refer to work by Rosenfeld (1979) and by Stokes, Fuehrer, and Childs (1980) concerning reasons for differences in self-disclosure patterns among women and men (as cited in Pearson & Nelson, 2000, p. 161). In addition, Pearson and Nelson (2000) report on research conducted by Deborah Tannen (1990) which revealed that "men prefer report talk, meaning they tend to view conversation as instrumental or as a way to demonstrate knowledge and reveal information [and] in contrast, women tend to prefer rapport talk, which means they view conversation as a way to develop relationships, strengthen ties, and share experiences" (p. 161). Differences are also evidenced in areas of nonverbal behaviors and similarities reported, i.e., both women and men disclose more as they mature and become older (pp. 161-162).

Pearson, et al., (1995) contend that "research has demonstrated some differences between women and men in perception, listening, and empathy" (p. 38). The authors go on to explain that these three constructs are interrelated, e.g., empathy has much to do with listening. "Psychological gender may be a better predictor of the skill of empathy than biological sex (Bem, 1975, cited in Pearson, et al., 1995, p. 38). In contrast,

similarities between females and males have been noted in other skill areas. Pearson, et al.. (1995) concede that "despite prevalent stereotypes, the evidence is unclear whether men or women are better listeners" (p. 38).

Pearson and Nelson (2000) add that listening is a skill composed of verbal and nonverbal skill and that the verbal component of listening (feedback) is many times not addressed accordingly (p. 119). Conversely, "the majority of your active-listening ability is shown through nonverbal communication" (Pearson & Nelson, p. 122). One argument that could arise here is that if women are reported as being more effective nonverbally and that is the critical component in the listening transaction, then are women better listeners?

Whatever the resultant outcome of this type of questioning, the fact remains that listening is the least studied communication skill and deemed to be one of the most used skills (Pearson & Nelson, 1995, p. 125). This holds true in all facets of life, but particularly as related to the workplace. Further, Beebe and Masterson (2000) argue that listening skill is an effective component of leadership and is "a skill that can be improved with practice" (p. 116).

Beebe and Masterson (1999) reviewed research on gender and nonverbal communication and note that Clara Mayo, Nancy Henley, and Judy Pearson offer informative reviews on this topic (cited in Beebe & Masterson, 1999, p. 157). Some of the conclusions mentioned include "differences in sending and receiving nonverbal messages" (p. 157). For example, females tended to be more nonverbally attuned than

males, in general. The authors caution, however, that one need not overgeneralize these differences nor assume that all females and males behave in certain ways.

Robbins (1998) concludes, after an "extensive review of the literature," that few differences exist between females and males regarding leadership (p. 377). However, the author concedes that some differences occur with respect to leadership style (p. 378). "While there is some disagreement among social scientists, researchers do conclude that there are real differences between the communication styles of men and women" (Sherman & Bohlander, 1992, p. 515). Overall, the jury may still be out on gender differences/similarities in terms of conclusive findings.

This brief review of gender research is not intended to be exhaustive in nature, but it does provide support for the assumption that gender-related demographic information can provide important information regarding communication. Research seems to indicate that investigation of diverse groups in the workplace has utility. "One of the primary forms of business communication is speech, and yet linguistic styles can vary widely depending on a persons's sex, ethnic background, and even region of origin" (Tannen, 1995, p. 138).

At the risk of overgeneralizing, it could be reasonable to ask: Do differences exist between female/male perceptions of communication behaviors and/or perceptions of the importance of communication training items? Further, do females and males receive different types of training? Schaff (1998) addresses this notion by reporting that "more

women then men report getting training in communication skills (46% to 37%)" (p. 65). Finally, is there any relationship between communication training provided and gender of the human resource practitioner?

Based on this review of gender literature and the communication training literature review, four hypotheses were developed. The focus is gender of human resource practitioner and four communication training items cited in the literature (leadership, listening, verbal communication, and nonverbal communication). Due to paucity of research, null hypotheses are presented.

H_{o1}: There are no significant differences between female and male practitioners in relation to leadership training provided and perceived to be important.

H_{o2}: There are no significant differences between female and male practitioners in relation to listening training provided and perceived to be important.

H_{o3}: There are no significant differences between female and male practitioners in relation to verbal communication training provided and perceived to be important.

H_{o4}: There are no significant differences between female and male practitioners in relation to nonverbal communication training provided and perceived to be important.

As profound change transforms the workplace at a rapid rate, employees and employers "must become increasingly adaptive and innovative as they develop stronger intellectual and interpersonal skills required for a diverse, complex world" (staff, Central Piedmont Community College, 1998, p. 1). This perception of the world of work comes

from staff writers at a two-year college. More than likely, few people in business and industry, including human resource practitioners, could argue against this point. Notably, this notion represents one of the few areas of common ground.

Diversity has been identified as a current reality and a future force in the workplace. The many faces and facets of diversity provide intriguing venues for communication research--especially in the area of training and development. "Improving any skill takes knowledge and practice" (Beebe & Masterson, 2000, p. 116).

CHAPTER III

Method

Survey research was chosen as the methodology because of its utility in exploratory and descriptive communication and human resource studies. This method is purported to be "[a] popular and straight-forward research strategy . . . used most often in communication research as a methodology [for] gathering descriptive information from representatives of a population" (Frey, et al., 1991, p. 180).

The research questions were addressed through lateral analysis of several research bases and are open-ended and non-directional.

Research Questions:

RQ1. What constitutes communication training and development in organizations?

RQ2. What communication skills are considered important by human resource practitioners and trainers in organizations?

RQ3: Are there significant differences between females and males with respect to leadership, listening, verbal communication, and nonverbal communication in terms of training provided and perceptions of importance?

A two-tiered methodology was used in this research. Quantitative data were collected via the survey instrument. Qualitative data were gathered by using open-ended questions. This provided for the collection of horizontal and vertical data with the most vertical being obtained from the telephone interviews. Triangulation consisted of combining this type of survey questioning with a mixed-mode sampling strategy: (1) Fortune 500 companies (postal mail surveys); (2) Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM) (e-mail surveys); and (3) companies voted as the "100 Best Companies to Work For" (telephone surveys).

Frey et al., (1991) emphasize that "the strategy used to reach survey respondents . . . influences both response rate and responses" (p. 185). The advantage of mixed mode surveys is that by using more than one mode to collect data, the "weaknesses of one mode may be offset by the strengths of another mode" (Lavrakas, 1993, cited in Singleton & Straits, 1999, p. 260).

Rationale for Method

This type of research method can be defined as exploratory/descriptive. The context for this study is communication-specific training in selected organizations. Survey research was deemed to be the most appropriate method. Questioning individuals who practice training in the business community (human resource managers, trainers, practitioners) provides the best means of inquiry. As Frey et al., (1991) report

"appropriateness of people who are asked to respond to survey questions strongly influences the kinds of responses elicited as well as the generalizability of the data generated" (p. 185.).

This procedure provides an opportunity to tap the actual state of communication training practices. And, by using a broad-based sampling frame, it should yield results that are not location specific (e.g. regional practices). Additionally, this study includes organizations of all types, thus avoiding industry-specific results. Hence, through surveys distributed by postal mail, e-mail, and telephone interviews, the methodology has been constructed to extract data from real-world events in a true sense of discovery.

Populations

The universe under study is defined as human resource practitioners (human resource managers/trainers) in the United States. Three populations were purposively chosen because of their specific characteristics and accessibility: (1) Fortune 500 companies listed in the Fortune magazine (1998) directory, (2) Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM) members listed in the 1998/2000 directories who voluntarily included e-mail addresses, and (3) human resource trainers employed by companies voted as the "The 100 Best Companies to Work For" (Fortune Magazine, January 1999, p. 19).

Rationale for Selection of Populations

The three populations, representing more than 1,600 possible respondents, were selected to provide a large potential respondent base that was geographically dispersed,

representing a broad cross-section of types of training provided. Central to this decision was the purposive intent to reach human resource practitioners in companies and organizations of various sizes and composition. Thus, perceptions from practitioners represent a peripheral view of communication skills training and are not contextually bound by organization characteristics.

Fortune 500 companies represent organizations at the large end of the spectrum and are widely dispersed across the United States. SHRM members represent association members who are primarily consultants actively engaged in training and development activities. The companies voted "100 Best" were selected based on reports in Fortune magazine that directly correlates winning companies with quantity and quality of training provided by those organizations (Branch, 1999, p. 118). Fortune, the Great Place to Work Institute, and Hewitt Associates combined to poll some 27,000 employees about the best places to work and why. "Extensive training and development is emerging as important because it offers benefits to both employer and worker" (p. 118). These companies are making "major investments in employee education at multimillion-dollar facilities and through generous tuition-reimbursement programs . . . on average, 43 hours of training on each employee in 1998--that's almost a full day more than last year" (Branch, 1999, p. 118).

In that study, approximately 30,000 employees were surveyed about their jobs and their companies. Many of the companies appearing in the "100" list had common features. The characteristic deemed important to this study was training and development. This

group of companies could provide valuable data in terms of comparing amounts of training offered by top companies to survey responses.

Sampling

Sampling procedures from populations chosen were not employed for this study. Since the focus of the study is to identify and report on communication items and perceptions of importance, this purpose was served, in this study, by attempting to survey all the members of each population selected. The sources described above were used for this purpose. This increases the possibility of receiving a high number of responses from targeted groups based on the characteristics of each particular population. Further, variables such as organizational size and category of industry, etc., are not being investigated. Other than for feasibility or economic issues, it would not be prudent to limit the size of the target groups within the scope and context of this study (the postal mail and telephone surveys cost the most). Due to the advent of technological communication, the e-mail surveys though clearly the most in number of surveys sent, actually proved to be the most cost-efficient method.

Subjects

Participants in the study consisted of 176 trainers and human resource managers from three distinct populations. Of those respondents, 172 indicated gender resulting in 112 females and 60 males (65% female, 35% male). This ratio is consistent with reports in the literature pointing to growing numbers of women in the human resource profession,

whether as consultants, trainers, or managers, e.g., "40% of human resource managers are women" (Wire Networks, 1997, cited in Princeton Review).

For those reporting age, the mean was 44.4 years (SD=10.39). The range reported was 21 (minimum) to 66 (maximum) years. Educational levels were reported as: High school = 1%, Some college = 7%, College degree = 37%, and Graduate degree = 56%. Mean educational level was 3.54 (SD= .71) years, indicating educational levels between college degrees and graduate degrees. Ethnicity of the sample was predominantly Caucasian (90%).

Procedures

The procedure for this study consisted of three data collection methods in three stages (mixed mode). Prior to collection of data through the administration of surveys, an analysis and syntheses of the communication and training literature was conducted in search of a viable (valid and reliable) survey instrument. This investigation led to surveys conducted by the Bureau of labor Statistics, Human Performance Practices, and ASTD (as noted in the literature review). In addition, other communication training items were identified and supported in the literature as being viable candidates to test on types of training provided and the importance criterion.

Questionnaire Development

The ASTD Industry Reports for 1996, 1997, and 1999 were analyzed. The Industry Report for 1998 was devoted solely to instructional technology issues and did not

include any training items related to this study. Therefore, this report was not included due to lack of relevance.

Although these reports include information about all facets of training provided by organizations with 100 or more employees (predominantly ASTD members), communication items from these surveys could be useful as a starting template or framework. Using these items as a gauge, it was then determined that other communication training items in the literature should be included in order to add new information to this established base.

Access to ASTD members and their target populations are restricted to survey inquiries. This is due, in part, to their reliance on Benchmarking Forum members and the use of mailing list companies with cost-prohibitive fees. One cannot access members through directory listings. Reaching members by e-mail provides a disclaimer notifying the user that any type of solicitation purposes will be prosecuted. One reason for this is that the association receives a percentage of mailing list sales.

ASTD Reports

ASTD "Industry Reports" for the years 1996, 1997, and 1999 provided a useful template of possible communication items. Unfortunately, comparisons between and among surveys of different years is difficult because the survey format changed each year. This means that there is inconsistency in item listings. Further, the 1998 issue did not provide any training information except that related to information technology. The methodology used for those studies was survey research and consisted exclusively of

postal mail-in surveys. Thus, ASTD employed one type of data collection method. In contrast, this study adopted three types of data collection procedures.

ASTD "Industry Reports" for the years 1996, 1997, and 1999 provide two types of training information. First, "general" types of training are indicated. Items for the 1999 issue include: computer applications, management skills/development, customer service, supervisory skills, computer systems/programming, executive development, technical skills/knowledge, personal growth, and communication skills. A copy of the 1999 survey reveals that communication skills training (listed in the definitional section as "interpersonal communication") refers to "training in communication and cooperation among individuals and groups, including conflict resolution, stress management, diversity training, teamwork and group dynamics" (survey trademarked by ASTD, "1999 Measurement Kit: Parts I and II").

Second, the ASTD reports provide a listing of "specific" types of training. Definitions are not provided for items in this category. Items listed in the 1999 issue include: new-employee orientation, leadership, sexual harassment, new-equipment operation, performance appraisals, team-building, safety, problem-solving/decision-making, train-the-trainer, product knowledge, public speaking/presentation skills, hiring/interviewing, time management, quality/process improvement, basic life/work skills, business/technical writing, managing change, strategic planning, customer education,

diversity, wellness, creativity, ethics, outplacement/retirement, remedial math/arithmetic, English as a second language, remedial writing, foreign language, remedial reading, and welfare-to-work transition.

Analysis of these reports reveals the following:

1. 1998 - The report is not relevant to this study;
2. 1999 - The listing collapses the two previous categories of problem-solving and decision-making into one exclusive category of training;
3. 1996 and 1997 issues include "listening" as a training category;
4. 1999 issue omits "listening" as a specific type of training category;
5. In ranking, "communication skills" as a general type of training ranks 4th in 1996, 3rd in 1997, and 2nd in 1999 in terms of training provided when compared to other types of general training (ASTD "Industry Reports," 1996-1999). The ranking of 1st goes to computer applications/technical skills development training.

Analysis of the "specific" types of training for the years 1996, 1997, and 1999 revealed rankings tabulated for types of training reported as provided (Table 1). Items with the highest reported percentages are listed first and continue in descending order.

Table 1

Specific Types of Training Reported as Provided by ASTD "Industry Reports" for the Years 1996, 1997, and 1999

1996	1997	1999
Leadership	Performance Appraisal	Leadership
Performance Appraisal	Teamwork/Leadership	Performance Appraisal
Teamwork	Listening	Team-Building
Listening	Presentation Skills/Problem-Solving	Problem-Solving/ Decision-Making
Problem-Solving	Writing	Public Speaking/ Presentation Skills
Presentation Skills	Diversity	Business/Technical Writing
Writing	Creativity	Diversity
Diversity		Creativity
Creativity		

Note. The 1998 "Industry Report" was omitted due to the irrelevancy of the issue (instructional technology) to this study. Tied rankings occurred for 1997 in categories of teamwork and leadership and presentation skills and problem-solving. Also, note the omission of the "listening" category in 1999. Source: ASTD "Industry Reports" for the years 1996, 1997, and 1999.

Analysis of Communication Items From Sources Other Than ASTD Reports

One initial and primary source for the analysis of communication items was the literature review conducted for this study. Communication training items were generated from relevant research bases of the disciplines mentioned (education, human resource development, communication) and specific reports (e.g., Human Performance Practices, Bureau of Labor Statistics) as noted. Items receiving the most counts and/or most support from the literature were considered possible survey items. These items were then synthesized and examined to detect common themes and/or frequencies. The validity of this approach rests on the assumption that the literature review is exhaustive in nature and the context is specific to the research problem.

Trainingsupersite

An electronic search on the Trainingsupersite (Training magazine) for the years (1991-2000) revealed that certain communication items received considerable attention. Table 2 shows the communication items and numbers of times mentioned via this site.

Table 2

Communication Items and Frequencies of Mention for Years 1991-2000 via the (Trainingsupersite)

Communication (238)	Communication training (223)	Communication Skills (163)
Leadership (180)	Group Communication (171)	Writing (155)
Problem-Solving (96)	Coaching (94)	Diversity (93)
Teamwork (92)	Listening (87)	Interpersonal (79)
Presentation Skills (73)	Creativity (47)	Performance Appraisal (36)
Mentoring (28)	Persuasion (16)	Verbal Communication (14) Nonverbal Communication (3)

Executive Excellence Database

Another search was conducted using the Executive Excellence database (Table 3). The database, in CD-Rom format, can search thousands of items related to human resource development and general business practices. This storehouse of knowledge contains business and educational data that have been researched and collected for a 15-year period (1985-1999). Print copies and CD-Rom editions of Executive Excellence are edited by Ken Shelton and published by Executive Excellence Publishing Co.

Table 3

Communication Items and Frequencies For Years 1985-1999 via Executive Excellence Database

Communication (589)	Communication training (299)	Communication Skills (283)
Leadership (1,067)	Group Communication (272)	Writing (21)
Problem-Solving (281)	Coaching (94)	Diversity (159)
Teamwork (260)	Listening (262)	Interpersonal (144)
Presentation Skills (39)	Creativity (410)	Performance Appraisal (69)
Mentoring (1,967)	Persuasion (45)	Verbal Communication (34) Nonverbal Communication (11)

Development of the Survey Instrument

In line with the survey design guidelines advocated by Isaac and Michael (1981), the decision was made to create a survey instrument based on the item templates noted. "Avoid using an existing survey, if it was designed for a different purpose, population or circumstance . . . although they may serve as a point of departure, surveys usually have aims or situational factors that are specific to each application" (p. 129).

It has been reported that "designing effective surveys can be deceivingly complex" (Frey et. al., 185). Additionally, the "strategy used to reach survey respondents (telephone, mail, personal contact) influences both response rate and responses" (p. 185). Third, the authors point out that the wording and order of questions asked in a survey can alter or influence participants' answers (p. 186). These factors were considered in designing the survey instrument and efforts were instigated to positively affect both survey responses and response rates.

Efforts to Increase Survey Response Rates

Frey et al., (2000) maintain that "despite valiant efforts, more and more people are refusing to complete surveys [and] studies show that about 35% of adults refuse to cooperate with survey researchers" (Looney, 1991, cited in Frey, et al., 2000, p. 207). The authors report that this is a dramatic decrease in numbers of people willing to respond as compared with the 90% rate typical during the 1950s (see Weisberg, et al., 1996, in Frey, et al., 2000, p. 207). One possible explanation for this decline could be a phenomenon the authors refer to as a sugging which involves telephone salespeople trying to sell under the guise of conducting surveys (Weisberg et al., 1996, in Frey et al., 2000, p. 207). Fraenkel and Wallen (1996) also attest to the decline in response rate levels citing possible reasons as lack of interest, forgetfulness, and unwillingness (p. 381). The authors also concur with the research showing an increase in non-response as a problem, particularly when using mail surveys (ranging from as low as 10 percent to 90 percent) (p. 381). Although also considered to be a serious problem, the authors note that item

non-response is rarely as high as total non-response. In light of these findings, this study has built in certain measures and features to help counter some of these problems.

Since mailed questionnaires can produce "a lower response rate because people do not feel as obligated to complete them" (Frey et al., p. 194), efforts were instigated to ensure increased response rates. Consistent with findings by Traugott, Groves and Lepkowski (1987) that use of university stationary could increase response rates by 30 percent (p. 80), the cover letter contained information referencing The University of Oklahoma and the IRB Office, in particular linking the university to the study. Further, the researcher's title under the signature was typed as "OU Research Associate." Frey et al. (1991) report that "sponsorship of a survey by a university, in particular, has been found to increase returns" (p. 194, see Houston & Nevin, 1977; Jones & Lang, 1980; Jones & Linda, 1978; Peterson, 1975, cited in Frey et al. 1991).

For e-mail surveys, the reference was typed as "OU Research Study," indicating that the project was, in fact, under the auspices of the university. Traugott et al. further suggest that sending surveys to specific-named individuals did not improve response rates in that study. Hence, the decision was made to use anonymous addresses for postal mail surveys.

The questionnaire format was intentionally designed to be brief and uncomplicated. This way, respondents could use little time and complete the survey with ease. This notion is supported by researchers including Isaac and Michael (1981) who suggest

keeping the "final product as brief, simple, clear and straightforward as possible [because] complex instruments generally will be resisted or rejected by most respondents" (p. 129).

Considerable attention was given to creating the cover letter (Appendix A). As noted by Borg and Gall (1989) important features include an assurance of confidentiality, giving subjects good reasons for completing the questionnaire, laying out the purpose(s) of the study, as well as associating the study with a professional institution or identity (pp. 436-437). The authors cite research showing that aiming questionnaires to certain professional groups deemed important can increase response rates effectively. This appeals to the altruistic and egocentric natures of respondents (Borg & Gall, 1989, p. 437). Schutt (1996) suggests that the combination of professional appearance of the cover letter and altruistic appeal seems to "produce a response rate 7% higher than indicating that respondents will receive something for their participation" (p. 290). The decision was made not to offer monetary rewards because that tactic, in some cases, contributes to bias. In line with Borg and Gall's recommendation for increasing response rates, respondents were offered an abstract of the results for their participation. An offer to send the respondents a copy or abstract of the results "is often effective" (Borg and Gall, p. 437).

The authors go on to report that "neatness and composition is an important factor in determining the number of replies" (Borg and Gall, p. 437). Respondents also appreciate a self-addressed, first-class stamped envelope for their convenience (Fowler, 1993, pp. 99-106; Miller, 1991, p. 144). Arnold and Lusk's (1987) meta-analysis of the

literature found that this yields a 9% return over business-reply rates (cited in Frey, et al., 2000, p. 216). The color of the questionnaires has also been found to affect response rates (Fox, Crask & Kim, 1988; cited in Frey, et al., 1991, p. 195). For this reason, high-grade buff-colored paper and envelopes were used for the mailed questionnaires. And, heeding advise from Schutt (1996), the researcher signed each cover letter personally and provided respondents with phone numbers, mailing address, and e-mail address as well as contact information for the IRB office in case they had any questions (p. 285).

Finally, Schutt (1996) contends that the basic problem in doing a questionnaire survey is to get a sufficient percentage of responses as a basis for drawing general conclusions. "The most important single factor in determining the percentage of responses you will obtain is the letter of transmittal used with your questionnaire" (Borg & Gall, p. 436).

The first phase in survey instrument development consisted of analyzing communication training items from the above-referenced sources. The next phase involved synthesizing those items, based on cited support and frequency of mention in noted trade journals. After completion of these processes, it was decided to keep the number of items to a minimum (15 items) in the interest of brevity and ease for participants. The items ultimately chosen appear on the survey (Appendix B).

The same 15 items are listed for Question 1 and for Question 2. However, the purpose and intent of the questions differ. Question 1 elicits responses on a continuum of training provided in the past two years. Question 2 probes the perceptions of human

resource practitioners by asking for their rankings of the importance of communication training items in terms of overall organizational effectiveness/health. It should be apparent that Question 1 partially replicates the format and communication items used in ASTD reports referred to previously. It is important to note that five new items were added to the 1996 survey items, five to the 1997 survey, and essentially seven to the 1999 item listing.

The seven new communication items (not appearing on the 1999 ASTD survey) generated by analysis of existing templates and supported in the review of the literature that appear in Questions #1 and #2 are: (1) Listening; (2) Verbal communication; (3) Group communication; (4) Interpersonal; (5) Nonverbal communication; (6) Mentoring/Coaching; and (7) Persuasion.

Question 2 provides further exploration and discovery by probing an area virtually untapped in the literature. Perceptions of the importance of each communication training item provides new insight into the training genre. Further, the open-ended provision, "other," following both Questions 1 and 2 provides an opportunity to retrieve rich data. Respondents have an opportunity to offer communication items that did not appear on the survey and possibly should be there.

Survey Question #1:

What types of communication training have you provided in the past two years?

Survey Question #2:

Please rate the following items in terms of your perception of importance on a continuum from 1-5, with 1 being "Not at all Important" and 5 being "Extremely Important."

Question 3 addresses the total amount of training provided that is considered to be communication training. This inquiry has been addressed in ASTD "Industry Reports" and a comparison will be reported following data collection. However, it is not expected that direct correlations exist between data collected in this study and the responses from ASTD studies due to the differences involved concerning the target groups, the comprehensive nature of those studies (in that they include all types of training and are not communication-specific), and the number of people commissioned to respond. The ASTD Industry Reports, on average, provide responses from about 1,000 usable surveys drawn from a universe of more than 100,000 U.S. organizations. For example, for the year 2000, Dun & Bradstreet's database defined the universe at 152,124 organizations with 100 or more employees. The context for these studies is training and types of training provided and includes all types (Training, Oct. 2000, p. 46). To date, these studies have not provided communication-specific results as addressed in this study nor the importance criterion.

Survey Question #3:

What percentage of the total amount of training you provide would you consider to be communication training?

Demographic Information:

The survey design includes a section for demographic information about respondents. Categories listed include: (1) gender; (2) age; (3) educational level; (4) and ethnic background.

It was decided that demographic information could potentially provide correlational information if supported in the literature; if not for this study, perhaps for future studies or replications. Interestingly, the surveys used as a framework for this study do not provide for demographic information. Analysis of these studies does not inform the reader as to the gender, age, educational levels, or ethnic background of survey respondents. This is identified as one area for further investigation.

Results

Analysis of Data

Data cleaning (to ensure accuracy) was conducted after collection of the surveys from each of three data collection methods. Data entry and data analysis were conducted via the SAS 6.0 program. Data scanning and data entry were checked twice to detect nonresponse items and missing data (i.e., usable surveys).

Descriptive Statistics

Summary statistics in the form of frequency counts and percentages appear in Table 4. Question 1 addressed nominal, categorical (dichotomous) data in the form of yes/no responses. Counts and percentages were also tabulated within method (postal,

phone, and e-mail) by crosstabs. More than 300 surveys were returned because of corporate "no solicitation" policies or undeliverable status (e-mail). The overall response rate for the surveys was 13%. By mode, response rates were 6% postal mail, 15% e-mail, and 35% phone, respectively.

Table 4

Frequency Distribution and Percentages for Communication Items by Method

Question #1

Communication Skill		Postal	Phone	E-Mail	Total
1.	Teamwork				
	Count	25	34	78	137
	% within method	92.6%	97.1%	68.4%	77.8%
2.	Performance Appraisal				
	Count	19	30	77	126
	% within method	70.4%	85.7%	67.5%	71.6%
3.	Leadership				
	Count	25	35	65	125
	% within method	92.6%	100%	57%	71%
4.	Presentation Skills				
	Count	25	32	57	114
	% within method	92.6%	91.4%	50%	64.8%
5.	Mentoring/Coaching				
	Count	14	32	65	111
	% within method	51.9%	91.4%	57%	63.1%
6.	Interpersonal				
	Count	12	33	58	103
	% within method	44.4%	94.3%	50.9%	58.5%
7.	Listening				
	Count	12	29	58	99
	% within method	44.4%	82.9%	50.9%	56.3%

Table 4 - Continued

8.	Verbal Communication				
	Count	17	28	53	98
	% within method	63%	80%	46.5%	55.7%
9.	Diversity				
	Count	18	29	42	89
	% within method	66.7%	82.9%	36.8%	50.6%
10.	Problem-Solving				
	Count	16	24	44	84
	% within method	59.3%	68.6%	38.6%	47.7%
11.	Group Communication				
	Count	7	27	48	82
	% within method	25.9%	77.1%	42.1%	46.6%
12.	Nonverbal Communication				
	Count	7	19	38	64
	% within method	25.9%	54.3%	33.3%	36.4%
13.	Writing				
	Count	14	26	19	59
	% within method	51.9%	74.3%	16.7%	33.5%
14.	Persuasion				
	Count	8	22	21	51
	% within method	29.6%	62.9%	18.4%	29%
15.	Creativity				
	Count	7	20	18	45
	% within method	25.9%	57.1%	15.8%	25.6%

n = 176, Frequency Missing = 6, ES = 170

Leadership received a resounding 100% "yes" response by phone method and was the single communication item, by any data collection method, to receive that level of response. Percentages of training provided as indicated by these 15 communication items above the 50th percentile concur, in part, with the literature.

The mixed mode data collection strategy resulted in the following response rates: (1) postal mail = 6%, (2) e-mail = 15%, and (3) telephone = 35%. Since the telephone response rate was substantially higher than the other two methods, chi-square, ANOVA, and MANOVA tests were used to test for differences among methods of survey administration.

First, the chi-square test was used to examine differences in gender, race, and education in the sample. For gender, there were no significant differences among the three methods ($\chi^2(2) = 1.847$, $p < .397$). Sample sizes were inadequate for chi-square analyses for both race and education assessments. Therefore, the postal mail and e-mail samples were combined to determine if mailing the survey produced different demographic responses than did phoning respondents. Although there were more e-mail surveys, the response rate was lower than the telephone mode.

Sample sizes across the different levels of race and ethnicity were too small for chi-square analyses. Both surveys primarily sampled Caucasian individuals with level 3 (college degree) or level 4 (graduate degree) educational levels. Table 5 shows the results of the 2 x 2 contingency table using only educational levels 3 and 4 by method (mailing versus phone) ($\chi^2(1) = 8.933$, $p < .003$). Twenty-five percent more of the phone respondents reported having graduate degrees then did mail respondents. Thus, the phone method resulted in a significantly larger proportion of respondents reporting graduate level degrees (70%) than did mail respondents (45.28%).

Table 5

Method by Education (Levels 3 and 4)

	Level 3 (College Degree) %	Level 4 (Graduate Degree) %	Total %
Mail	29	24	53
	18.95	15.69	34.64
	54.72	45.28	
	49.15	25.53	
Phone	30	70	100
	19.61	45.75	65.36
	30.00	70.00	
	50.85	74.47	
Total	59	94	153
	38.56	61.44	100

Note: Frequency Missing = 23

One-way ANOVA was used to test for mean differences in age for the three groups. An F_{max} test for homogeneity of variance revealed an acceptable ratio of 2.18, so unequal sample sizes were not judged to bias the overall F substantially. Thus, there was no significant main effect for method ($F = 1.73$, $p < .181$).

The MANOVA approach inspected differences in mean responses to the 15 items on survey question two. Using Wilk's Lambda, to test means of groups, the test for a method effect was significant ($F = 1.90$, $p < .0042$) (SPSS Base 10. Guide, 1999, p. 246). This implied that differences in responses to the 15 items existed. Investigation of the

univariate ANOVA's for each item, however, revealed no significant mean differences when using Scheffe's correction procedure for Type I error rate. Thus, there does not appear to be any major differential response patterns on the individual items based on type of survey method.

Overall, no real differences existed among categories (postal mail, e-mail, telephone) when compared with respondents demographic information (age, gender, education, race) and the 15 questionnaire communication items (mean scores). For this reason, the respondents were viewed as one group (n = 176) in this study. This is consistent with procedures outlined by Frey, et al. (2000) for explaining "representativeness of samples in relation to sample size and sensitivity to detecting subtle and important differences" (p. 390).

Further, respondents to the telephone surveys consisted of human resource practitioners working for companies voted "100 Best to Work For" (Appendix D). It seems unlikely that mail respondents from the "Fortune 500" and SHRM represent respondents with fewer graduate level degrees. One possible explanation for phone respondents reporting a larger percentage of graduate degrees could be that, in general, telephone respondents offered more information in this study. For example, the open-ended question produced 93 items by phone method. In contrast, the postal and e-mail methods combined produced only 57 volunteered communication items. This takes into account the fact that the combined mail surveys outnumbered the telephone surveys four to one.

Responses for Question 2 indicate the respondents' perceptions of importance of communication items (15) by using a Likert scale and rating system with a 1-5 continuum (1 = "Not at all important," 5 = "Extremely important"). Summary statistics for the 15 communication training items are reported in Table 6 in the form of frequencies and relative frequencies (percentages). Table 7 shows mean and standard deviation scores for each communication training item. Frequencies calculated by method (Table 4) indicate substantial differences between the phone mode and other modes. This disparity occurred, in part, because of disproportionate group sizes. However, the mode of data collection may be a contributing factor as well.

Interestingly, "listening" received top ranking and was an item dropped from the 1999 ASTD Survey that year. The first eight items were ranked between "Very important" and "Extremely important" according to the respondents' recorded perceptions (i.e. mean scores 4.0 or above). The remaining seven items were ranked between "Fairly important" and "Very important" on the Likert scale (mean scores between 3.0 and 4.0).

Table 6

Frequency Distribution/Relative Frequencies for Question 2

Rating Scale for Importance: 1 = Not at all Important, 5 = Extremely Important

Communication Item	1	%	2	%	3	%	4	%	5	%	n
1. Listening	3	2	3	2	7	4	42	26	106	66	161
2. Leadership	1	.6	5	3	19	12	39	24	96	60	160
3. Teamwork	1	.6	4	2	19	12	49	31	87	54	160
4. Verbal	0	0	5	3	19	12	54	34	83	52	161
5. Interpersonal	3	2	5	3	19	12	52	33	80	50	159
6. Problem-Solving	2	1	3	2	23	14	67	42	64	40	159
7. Performance Appraisal	4	3	6	4	35	22	50	32	63	40	158
8. Mentoring	2	1	9	6	27	17	67	42	56	35	161
9. Group	3	2	10	6	30	19	60	39	52	34	155
10. Diversity	4	3	15	9	41	26	46	29	52	33	158
11. Presentation Skills	2	1	12	7	54	34	47	29	46	29	161
12. Writing	1	.6	10	6	46	28	68	42	37	23	162
13. Nonverbal	11	7	20	13	48	30	46	29	35	22	160
14. Persuasion	6	4	17	11	54	34	50	32	30	19	157
15. Creativity	6	4	17	11	53	34	58	37	24	15	158
Total	49		141		494		795		911		2390

Note: Items appear in descending order, highest (5) to lowest (1)
Category 1 = 2%, Category 2 = 6%, Category 3 = 21%, Category 4 = 33%, Category 5 = 38%

Table 7

Mean and Standard Deviation Scores for Communication Training Items by Method in Highest to Lowest Ranking Order

	Method							
	Postal n=27		Phone n=35		E-Mail n=114		Total n=176	
Communication Item	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
1. Listening	4.23	.65	4.43	.70	4.59	.93	4.50	.86
2. Leadership	4.31	.74	4.77	.55	4.31	.93	4.41	.85
3. Teamwork	4.42	.64	4.49	.78	4.28	.89	4.34	.84
4. Verbal Communication	3.85	.66	4.40	.74	4.42	.87	4.32	.84
5. Interpersonal	3.88	.71	4.49	.74	4.23	1.08	4.23	.98
6. Problem-Solving	4.07	.62	4.06	1.06	4.30	.80	4.21	.84
7. Performance Appraisal	4.04	.89	4.31	.99	3.98	1.02	4.06	1.0
8. Mentoring/Coaching	4.23	.82	4.14	1.03	3.98	.90	4.05	.92
9. Group Communication	3.68	.84	4.00	.97	4.02	1.01	3.97	.98
10. Diversity	3.78	.93	3.91	1.07	3.78	1.11	3.81	1.07
11. Writing	3.46	.81	3.86	.94	3.84	.94	3.79	.93
12. Presentation Skills	3.56	.89	3.97	1.04	3.74	1.07	3.76	1.04
13. Persuasion	3.31	.74	3.69	1.28	3.52	1.03	3.52	1.05
14. Creativity	3.42	.76	3.85	1.05	3.38	1.07	3.48	1.04
15. Nonverbal Comm.	3.12	.86	3.77	1.24	3.44	1.22	3.46	1.19

Table 8 reports z-scores calculated for the 15 communication items (M = 4, SD = .96). These scores represent standard deviation units in positive and negative directions from the grand mean for all 15 communication items respectively.

Table 8

Z-Scores for the Fifteen Communication Items (M = 4.0, SD = .96)

(Minimum = 3.04, Maximum = 4.96, Range = 1.92)

Communication Item	Score	Z-Score
1. Listening	4.50	+.52
2. Leadership	4.41	+.42
3. Teamwork	4.34	+.35
4. Verbal	4.32	+.32
5. Interpersonal	4.23	+.24
6. Problem-Solving	4.21	+.22
7. Performance Appraisal	4.06	+.06
8. Mentoring/Coaching	4.05	+.05
9. Group	3.97	-.03
10. Diversity	3.81	-.20
11. Writing	3.79	-.19
12. Presentation Skills	3.76	-.24
13. Persuasion	3.52	-.50
14. Creativity	3.48	-.52
15. Nonverbal	3.46	-.54

Items 1-8 scored positively above the mean and items 9-15 scored below the mean. In general, 50% of the communication items are represented in the upper and lower 50th percentile range (53% upper and 47% lower). These scores indicate the relationship of each item to the total mean score for all items respectively.

Stevens (1990) reports that one approach to analysis of data is to "first demonstrate overall significance, and then follow up to assess the significant subsources of variation (i.e., which particular groups differed)" (p. 63). The author further states that "this approach is appropriate in exploratory studies where it is necessary to first establish that an effect exists" (Stewart, 1986, p. 63). For this reason, analysis using this approach was conducted for Question 2 and consisted of using a randomized block design, "typically robust to violations of multivariate normality" with the 15 communication items as dependent variables (Toothaker, 1991, p. 94). Repeated measures analysis was conducted using a multivariate ANOVA (MANOVA) design. Implicit in this testing are certain assumptions. With respect to Question 2, the null hypothesis implicitly assumes that the mean ratings for each category are equal. Results of this analysis for the 176 respondents minus 23 for missing data (n = 153) showed a significant difference between at least two categories ($F(14, 139) = 19.4982$, $p < .0001$). Thus, the null hypothesis stating no differences would be rejected because differences in mean ratings did occur. This means that differences exist among the items. Now, it is appropriate to identify where those differences occur among the 15 items.

Therefore, since overall significance has been established in this model, the next stage consisted of inspecting possible mean differences among all pairs of categories (pair-wise comparisons). This design consisted of running two-tailed, dependent t-tests or

post hoc comparison tests for the 15 communication items. A Bonferroni correction procedure was used to adjust the probability of Type I error (Stevens, 1990, p. 202, Toothaker, 1991, p. 37). Generally, "the F test is particularly robust to violations of the assumption of equal standard deviations" (Agresti & Finlay, 1986, p. 406). Results from this procedure appear in Table 9. The table includes only cells with significant mean differences at the .05 level (F = 12.67 or higher). Two cell items were extremely close to significance: Group/Interpersonal (F = 12.21), and Problem-Solving/Listening (F = 12.65).

Dr. Gary Kelley, instructor for West Texas A&M University, recommended this testing, in part, because "When more than two groups are being compared, the F-test will not be itself tell us which pairs of means are different" (Fraenkel and Wallen, 1996, p. 219). In concert with this thinking, the post hoc analysis was conducted. Further, regarding the collapsing of 15 items into two groupings, "the probability of finding a significant difference by chance alone increases rapidly with the number of tests . . . so, we caution against requesting tests for many variables" (SPSS Base 10.0 Applications Guide, 1999, p. 105). Therefore, the Bonferroni correction is suggested as a possible solution to multiple testing problems.

Table 9

Significant F Values Reported from Post Hoc Multiple Comparison Tests

	Problem Solving	Mentoring	Diversity	Teamwork	Interpersonal	Verbal	Leadership	Listening	Writing	Creativity	Nonverbal	Persuasion
Presentation Skills	23.90			37.80	27.27	48.75	45.67	76.80				
Group				24.57		27.46	27.91	44.91		26.18	23.66	15.76
Teamwork		13.55	37.94						40.20	96.36	69.19	53.89
Performance Appraisal							16.88	18.44		28.80	27.15	23.92
Problem-Solving			26.92						31.00	81.56	56.13	60.93
Diversity					20.81	39.26	53.81	59.97				
Mentoring						14.64	26.60	28.94		28.88	26.70	19.65
Leadership									48.94	100.43	86.55	83.10
Listening					13.22				80.28	101.37	118.76	95.09
Verbal									51.35	103.75	101.75	78.49
Interpersonal									26.43	75.93	79.84	46.86
Creativity									13.24			

Note: F Values reported as significant at the $a = .05$ level using the Bonferroni correction.

Communication items appearing in Table 9 were significantly different in pair-wise comparisons if the F value was 12.67 or higher. Two additional pairs (not included in the table) were marginally close to this level of significance: (1) Group and Interpersonal ($F = 12.21$), and (2) Problem-Solving and Listening ($F = 12.65$).

Regarding Question 3, respondents reported the percentage of total training provided that each respondent considered to be communication training. The mean score calculated for percentage of total training was 53.16%. Clearly, this indicates an average of at least 30% below the figures reported by ASTD reports, reflecting amounts of communication training provided under "general" types of training. The reports for 1996 (83%) and 1997 (88%) indicate a five percent increase in organizations providing communication training. The 1998 report does not address communication training in any way and the 1999 report reports the same figure as in 1997 (88%). Correlations between these figures and those within this study have not been calculated due to the disparity in group sizes and differences in scope between the studies, but are worthy of mention. By all accounts, the results show, in general, that more than 50% of training provided is considered to be communication-related as reported by respondents.

Question 1: Qualitative Data Analysis

The "other" open-ended section for Question 1 revealed items listed on Table 10, Table 11, and Table 12. These three tables are differentiated by data collection method and represent postal mail, e-mail, and telephone modes respectively. Responses indicate communication training items/skills volunteered by respondents.

Table 10

Postal Mail Survey Responses Volunteered ("Other")

1.	Total Quality Management
2.	Management and Production Focus
3.	Continuous Improvement
4.	Change Management
5.	Situational Leadership (Blanchard)
6.	Strategic Thinking/Strategic Communication
7.	Manager Meetings
8.	Employment Law
9.	Sexual Harassment/Consensual Behavior
10.	Effective Meetings
11.	Facilitation Skills
12.	Spanish
13.	American Sign Language
14.	Time Management
15.	Myers-Briggs Type Indicator
16.	Negotiation Skills
17.	Sales Skills

Total = 17 Items
n = 27

Table 11

E-Mail Survey Responses Volunteered ("Other")

1.	Affirmative Action Training
2.	HR Policies for Non-Profit Organizations
3.	Sexual Harassment (3)
4.	Policy and Procedure
5.	HR 101
6.	Selection and Hiring
7.	Retention
8.	Budgeting
9.	Workplace Violence Prevention
10.	NEO (New Employee Orientation)
11.	Supervisory
12.	Situational Management
13.	Facilitative Leadership
14.	Strategic Planning/Communication
15.	Time Management
16.	Project Management
17.	Objective Setting
18.	DISC/Carlson Learning Co. Books
19.	Feedback Skills (2)
20.	Mediation Training
21.	Negotiation Skills
22.	Collaboration (like teamwork, but not on same teams)
23.	Dialogue Skills
24.	Selling Ideas and Concepts
25.	Powerful Conversations
26.	Communications from Organizations to their Employees
27.	Conflict Management
28.	Cross-Cultural Orientation
29.	Organizational Culture and Structure
30.	Behavioral Interviewing
31.	Phone Etiquette
32.	Customer Service (3)
33.	Career Paths
34.	Myers-Briggs Type Indicator
35.	Transition/Career Development

Total = 40 Items (5 Repeated Items)
n = 108

Table 12

Telephone Survey Responses Volunteered ("Other")

1.	Budgets
2.	Retention
3.	Compliance Training (law)
4.	Project Management
5.	Continuous Improvement (2)
6.	Loyalty
7.	Self-Improvement
8.	7 Habits of Highly Effective People (Covey)
9.	Customer Service Excellence/Customer Communication (6)
10.	Sales/Selling Ideas (5) ("persuasion" = negative connotation)
11.	Age-Specific Differences
12.	Conferencing
13.	Face-to-Face Communication (4)
14.	Misperceived Communication (2)
15.	Collaboration (2)
16.	Decision-Making (4)
17.	Feedback (40)
18.	Conflict Resolution (4)
19.	Focus Groups
20.	Negotiation (5)
21.	Public Speaking
22.	Facilitation Training (3)
23.	Soft Skills (2)
24.	Interviewing Skills
25.	Voice Mail
26.	Language/Spanish (2)
27.	Cross-Cultural/Multi-National (4)
28.	Corporate Cultural (2)
29.	Communicating Under Stress
30.	Lifelong Learning
31.	Virtual Teams
32.	Media Training
33.	Business/Technical Writing (5)
34.	E-Mail (4)
35.	Etiquette
36.	Approachability

Table 12 -- Continued

37. Visibility
38. Accountability (2)
39. Out-of-Box Thinking (challenging status quo)
39. Supervisory Programs
40. Frontline Leadership
41. Rewarding Positive Results
42. Strategic Communication (2) (communicating vision and mission statements)
43. Servant Leadership (2)
44. TQM
45. Change Management

Total = 93 Items
n = 35

Note: Of 170 completed surveys, a total of 150 items were generated by respondents. After collapsing items because of overlap (repetition), 98 mutually exclusive items remained. The numbers in parentheses indicate how many times the item appeared as a response (frequencies). Most items appear to be subcategories of the questionnaire/survey items noted.

In line with qualitative information synthesis methods, communication items generated from respondents were initially counted. This is one of the tactics recommended by Miles and Huberman (1994) for generating meaning among qualitative data (cited in Swanson & Holton, eds., 1997, p. 104). As themes emerged, patterns were noted and items were clustered into conceptual bins.

Independent coders familiar with business communication and training practices were employed to assist in these procedures. Intercoder reliability occurred at the .96 level. The proposed categories with assigned communication items were then screened by a panel of experts including Dr. Cheryl Peat Nance, retired Business Division Chairman

and former Director of the Employee Development Center (Business and Industry Training Program within the management department at Amarillo College) and David O. Hernandez, Instructor, management division for Amarillo College. Agreement among panel members occurred above the .90 level. The 24 categories and subcategories (communication items) appear in Table 13 with percentages of total frequencies. In the interest of consistency, categories reflected the ASTD 1999 State of the Industry framework as did the questionnaire items for this study. In general, 49% of the communication items generated fell into the first five categories.

Table 13

Categorization/Themes Clustering of Communication Items Generated

Category Subcategories	Count Frequency	Category Total	% of Total
1. QUALITY PROCESS IMPROVEMENT		21	14%
Customer Service Continuous Improvement Organizational Culture and Structure Total Quality Management Accountability Management and production Focus Customer Loyalty and Commitment	9 3 3 2 2 1 1		
2. PROBLEM-SOLVING/ DECISION-MAKING Negotiation Skills Conflict Resolution Collaboration Mediation Skills	4 7 5 3 1	20	14%

3. LEADERSHIP		12	8%
Situational Leadership	2		
Manage Effective Meetings	2		
Servant Leadership	2		
Supervisory Skills	2		
Facilitative Leadership	1		
Approachability	1		
Visibility	1		
Front-Line Leadership	1		
4. BASIC LIFE/WORK SKILLS		10	7%
Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)	2		
Transition/Career Development	2		
DISC/Carlson Learning Co. Books	1		
Phone Etiquette	1		
Self-Improvement	1		
7 Habits of Highly Effective People	1		
Lifelong Learning	1		
Etiquette (business)	1		
5. VERBAL COMMUNICATION		10	7%
Feedback	6		
Misperceived Communication	2		
Powerful Conversations	1		
Dialogue Skills	1		
6. STRATEGIC PLANNING	1	10	7%
Strategic Communication -- (communicating vision and mission statements)	2		
Budgeting	2		
Project Management Objective Setting	5		
7. BUSINESS/TECHNICAL WRITING	5	9	6%
E-Mail	4		
8. HIRING/INTERVIEWING	3	8	5%
Employment Law	1		
HR Policies for Non-Profit Organizations	1		
Policy and Procedure	1		
HR 101	1		
Compliance Training	1		

9. INTERPERSONAL Face-to-Face Communication Communicating Under Stress Communicating with Media/Interviews Voice Mail	 4 2 1 1	8	5%
10. DIVERSITY Cross-Cultural/Multi-National Affirmative Action Age-Specific Differences	 5 1 1	7	5%
11. PERSUASION Selling One's Ideas and Concepts	 7	7	5%
12. GROUP COMMUNICATION Facilitation Skills/Meetings Conferencing Focus Groups	 4 1 1	6	4%
13. FOREIGN LANGUAGE Spanish American Sign Language	 3 1	4	3%
14. SEXUAL HARASSMENT	4	4	3%
15. MANAGING CHANGE	2	2	1%
16. MENTORING/COACHING Retention	 2	 2	1%
17. SOFT SKILLS TRAINING	2	2	1%
18. TIME MANAGEMENT	2	2	1%
19. CREATIVITY Out-of-Box Thinking	 1	1	.7%
20. NEW EMPLOYEE ORIENTATION (NEO)	 1	1	.7%
21. PERFORMANCE APPRAISAL Rewarding Positive Results	 1	1	.7%
22. PUBLIC SPEAKING/PRESENTATION SKILLS	1	1	.7%
23. SAFETY Workplace Violence Prevention	1	1	.7%

24. TEAMWORK/TEAM-BUILDING Virtual Teams	1	1	.7%
TOTAL	150	150	100%

Note: Communication items generated by respondents for Question 2 are not reported because respondents generally listed all items under Question 1. No respondents indicated an importance rating for any items volunteered by them.

Finally, the four null hypotheses developed from the literature concerning gender and communication items were addressed:

Ho_1: There are no significant differences between female and male practitioners in relation to leadership training provided and perceived to be important;

Ho_2: There are no significant differences between female and male practitioners in relation to listening training provided and perceived to be important;

Ho_3: There are no significant differences between female and male practitioners in relation to verbal communication training provided and perceived to be important;

Ho_4: There are no significant differences between female and male practitioners in relation to nonverbal communication training provided and perceived to be important.

Based on prior research in communication training, I decided to test for independence between male and female responses concerning four types of training offered (Question 1). Each type of training was assessed separately in a 2 x 2 table (gender by availability of training, chi-square tests). The literature indicated possible differences among females and males, particularly in the four areas tested. However, the

results show that for the communication items, leadership (females = 69%, males = 73%) and for listening (males = 53%, females = 60%), training provided showed little difference in percentages by gender. Conversely, for the two other communication items tested, nonverbal communication (females = 43%, males = 24%) and verbal communication (males = 44%, females = 62%), a significant lack of independence was indicated for both items for gender. This could occur, in part, due to the oversampling of females to males proportionately in the study.

Pearson's chi-square test statistic was used to assess independence in each 2 x 2 table (Agresti and Finlay, 1986, p. 204). Table 14 shows the Chi-square values (χ^2), their chi-square probability, and the power to detect this observed effect size. A significant lack of independence existed in two of the four predicted areas of training.

Verbal training was significant with respect to ($\chi^2(df = 1) = 4.902$, $p < .027$). Only 44% of the males provided verbal training while 62% of the females offered this training.

Nonverbal training also was significant ($\chi^2(df = 1) = 6.009$, $p < .014$). Twenty-four percent of the males indicated they provided nonverbal training compared to 43% of the females. These results indicate support or acceptance for null Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2 (null) . However, significant differences point to rejection of null Hypotheses 3 and 4. Based on respondents in this study, gender similarities exist for the communication items (leadership and listening). This concurs with much of the literature

in the research review. Further, the communication items (verbal and nonverbal communication) show differences with respect to gender for both type of training provided and perceived importance.

Table 14

Results for Chi-Square Tests of Independence Among Leadership, Verbal Communication, Nonverbal Communication, and Listening Training by Gender of Manager/Trainer

Type of Training	χ^2	Degrees of Freedom (df)	Probability of Observed Value	Proportion of Males Offering Training	Proportion of Females Offering Training	Power of Detection (a=.05)
Leadership	0.265	1	0.607	.73	.69	0.080870
Verbal	4.902	1	0.027	.44	.62	0.600300
Nonverbal	6.009	1	0.014	.24	.43	0.688420
Listening	0.873	1	0.350	.53	.60	0.154440

To address differences that may exist in the importance that males and females place on these four types of training (Question 2), four ANCOVAs were run controlling for the effects of age. Age did not have an effect on the importance of training; however, neither the sex by age main interaction or the age main effect (even when run in a model without the interaction) accounted for a significant amount of the variability in the importance response. Gender or sex, by itself, did show a significant difference for

nonverbal training ($F(1,158) = 5.97$, $p < .0157$). This echos the results found in the qualitative analysis of nonverbal training offered. Females' average rating of importance on a scale from 1-5 was 3.63, while the average ranking for males was 3.16. Table 15 shows the means for the rankings and the F statistics for the model using only gender (sex) as a predictor of importance.

Table 15

ANOVA Tests for Male and Female Differences in Training Importance

Type of Training	F	Df	Prob.	Mean Male	Mean Female	Power
Leadership	0.08	(1, 158)	0.7718	4.39	4.43	0.059605
Verbal	0.30	(1, 158)	0.5857	4.26	4.34	0.084393
Nonverbal	5.97	(1, 158)	0.0157	3.16	3.63	0.680040
Listening	0.10	(1, 159)	0.7510	4.53	4.48	0.061515

The last analysis considered the differences between females and males on the average perceived importance of both interpersonal and group skills. Based on groupings identified by Rubin, R. B., Rubin, A. M., and Piele, L. J. (1996, p. 6) in concert with the communication levels identified by Frey, Botan, and Kreps (1991, p. 33), the 15 communication items were categorized into two specific groups: (1) interpersonal skills; and (2) group communication skills. The former, in general, consists of skills required at the interpersonal level (intrapersonal, interpersonal dyads) and the latter, group skills,

comprise skills needed when the communication transaction involves three or more people. Grouping communication training skills into these two categories is arbitrary, at best, but provides an opportunity to view the 15 items from a different perspective.

The interpersonal grouping included listening, verbal communication, interpersonal communication, creativity, writing, nonverbal communication, and persuasion. Group skills included presentation skills, group communication, teamwork, performance appraisal, problem-solving, diversity, mentoring/coaching, and leadership. Accordingly, the mean scores were reported as 3.892 for interpersonal skills and 4.087 for group skills.

Average rankings for the items in each group determined each individual score on interpersonal and group skills importance. Two ANOVAs were conducted to test for group mean differences in these rankings. Significant differences were found for importance of group skills training ($F(1, 160) = 5.58$, $p < .0194$). Females rated the group skills training as 4.16 on average, whereas males rated this at 3.95. Table 16 shows the F statistics and means for each ANOVA.

Table 16

ANOVA for Differences Among Females and Males Concerning Interpersonal and Group Skills Training

	F	Df	Prob.	Mean Male	Mean Female	Power
Interpersonal	.56	(1, 160)	.4557	3.84	3.92	0.13813
Group	5.58	(1, 160)	.0194	3.95	4.16	0.33382

A dependent t-test was run to test the differences between mean ratings of interpersonal training importance and group skill training importance. The mean difference of -.185 was significant ($t(168) = -4.32$, $p < .0001$). The mean rating for the interpersonal skills' importance was 3.89 while the mean rating for the group skills' importance was 4.08. Table 17 gives the summary statistics for this analysis. Looking at the power estimate, if this is the true difference in the population, then this will be detected in 99 out of 100 samples of this size ($N = 169$).

Table 17

Summary Statistics for Interpersonal Skills versus Group Skills on the Importance Criterion

Items	t	df	Prob.	Mean Difference	Power of Detection Given a 2-tailed t-test
Interpersonal vs. Group skills Importance	-4.3198537	168	<.0001	-0.1850662	0.99023

These findings are consistent with those reported in the Table 9 post hoc results showing marginally significant differences in the pair-wise comparison measures for group and interpersonal skills. This indicates that differences exist between the communication items (interpersonal and group) and, therefore, that the null hypothesis stating no difference between mean scores is rejected. Further, this shows that differences exist in male and female perceptions of importance for these items. Finally, group communication

skills and interpersonal skills appear to be mutually exclusive when grouped as categories of communication items as well as when tested as independent communication variables (items).

Discussion

The research questions posited in this study address communication training provided by U.S. organizations and the importance of these communication items as perceived by human resource practitioners (trainers and managers). Primary goals of the study included exploring and describing the current state of communication skills training and development.

To this end, a communication-specific training instrument was developed when extensive analysis and examination of human resource (training) and communication literature revealed no such assessment tool. ASTD "Industry Reports" from the years 1996, 1997, and 1999 provided a basic framework of training skills, as did Bureau of Labor Statistics reports, and Human Performance Practices Survey data.

Results showed that differences exist between types of communication provided for the years (1998-2000) and communication training items perceived to be important (Table 6 and Table 7). As indicated in the tables, teamwork ranked first in type of training provided; however, listening receives top ranking in the importance rating. Consistent with the research literature, leadership and interpersonal skills were rated highly for training provided and deemed important by practitioners.

Performance appraisal is the second most offered communication training, but rates seventh in terms of importance. In concert, presentation skills ranked fourth in training provided, but twelfth on the importance criterion. Diversity ranks fairly evenly ranking ninth in training provided and tenth for importance.

Leadership and teamwork rank within the top three items for Question 1 and Question 2. The tables show that the last five skills on each listing clustered fairly similarly as lower-ranking items. These common skills include writing, nonverbal, persuasion, and creativity. Commonality also occurs for group communication ranked eleventh in training provided and twelfth in importance. For all 15 communication training items, 33% show a rating of "Very Important" and 38% receive the "Extremely Important" rating. Overall, the tables illustrate that much of communication training provided runs counter to communication perceived to be the most important by respondents. Combining results from both tables suggests that items ranked highly for both questions need to be considered integral parts of communication training programs, but particularly those rated highest in importance. At a minimum, items ranked highly in importance should be included in communication training assessments as communication skills.

Mean scores and standard deviation scores reported in Table 7 echo results reported in Table 6 down to item 10. Communication items 11 through 15 do not show parallel results. For example, the descending order for these five skills in terms of frequency is: presentation skills, writing, nonverbal, persuasion, and creativity. In contrast, the descending order by mean scores is writing, presentation skills, persuasion,

creativity, and nonverbal communication. Clearly, writing and presentation skills merely flip positions. Nonverbal makes the most distinctive move from thirteenth to fifteenth place. Overall, these results are extremely consistent with each other and indicate that the first eight items rate at the overall mean (4.0) or above. The remaining seven items are less than one standard deviation below the mean. This implies that certain communication items are perceived to be more important than others by respondents and all 15 items rank above "Somewhat Important."

Nonverbal communication rating fifteenth in importance is somewhat surprising since much research points to the notion that people believe the nonverbal message over the verbal message (Arnold & McClure, 1993, p. 6). Other research cited in the literature review adheres to that notion. The extremely high rating for listening, based on the literature, is not surprising. This hierarchy of communication training is further supported by z-scores showing that the cutoff between positive and negative direction occurs at the eighth item.

Question 3 results show that more than 50 percent of the total training provided by respondents is considered communication training (53.16%). This concurs with the literature and the ASTD reports cited, with organizations reporting large amounts of communication training for employees. The amount of communication training provided may not be debatable at this point. The driving question in the context of this study is to ascertain exactly what that training is.

Central to findings of this study are the identification of specific types of training that are branded as communication training and, ultimately, how important each item is

perceived to be. In other words, if one is designing a communication training program or conducting a needs assessment, which communication skill items need to be included? And, what types of communication training are likely to benefit the organizational system in terms of positive outputs? Arguments could be made for each item on the communication training questionnaire. But, the survey information provided here and analysis of the 15 items provides a first step toward more accurately identifying and interpreting the nature of communication skills training.

Results reported up to this point address Question 1 and Question 2 quantitatively. Data collected from the open-ended "other" question provides qualitative data generated by respondents themselves. Using a mixed mode strategy (postal, e-mail, telephone), communication training items provided by practitioners are shown in Tables 10, 11, and 12. Interestingly, although the postal and e-mail surveys targeted much larger audiences than did the telephone mode (100), the telephone method generated more than twice the items of the other two modes. This takes into account the fact that follow-up was conducted for e-mail surveys when the SHRM 2000 directory was published. In sum, 35 telephone respondents offered richer data than 117 e-mail respondents. One contribution of this study may be in demonstrating that telephone interviews should be considered as a primary mode for data collection in studies of this type (Table 5).

Merely providing a listing of volunteered items would not have been completely informative. Therefore, information synthesis procedures, e.g., counting and clustering, were used to more clearly show common themes. Table 13 shows 24 categories

developed by coders based on the 1999 ASTD survey framework (types of training). Clearly, the first two categories contain almost 30% of communication items volunteered.

Predictions or expectations were not stated at the onset of this study. However, it could not have been anticipated from the literature reviewed that quality process improvement skills would rate first as an area of communication training provided. The argument can be made that these items are communication-related. However, these items are clearly business related.

Interestingly, the items volunteered by respondents and then categorized accordingly, almost parallel the categories offered by Giber, Carter, and Goldsmith (Eds.) in their Best Practices in Organization & Human Resources Development Handbook (2000). In this work, an assessment tool is shown entitled "Skills Assessment Matrix" (p. 423). Basic skills fall into three major categories: (1) communication skills, (2) teamwork, and (3) accountability, judgment, and responsibility. The matrix bears a close resemblance to the template of communication items offered by respondents (communication-related and business focused).

This points to needs that organizations may have in terms of overall organizational improvement practices and accountability issues. As noted in the introduction of this study, organizational effectiveness almost assuredly involves bottom-line issues, i.e. ROI (return on investment) as well as issues directed to the human side of business.

As Geber (1995) reports, "a growing number of business leaders are demanding that the training function prove that it can really effect desired behaviors and can contribute to the bottom line" (p. 27). In the midst of this bottom-line thinking, Hequet

(1996) contends that a growing number of companies continue to measure the business value of their training programs, but that simultaneously practitioners are leaning toward using "nonfinancial tools to assess the value of training and other nonfinancial assets of the company" (p. 1). Hequet (1996) reports that traditional financial metrics such as profit, return on investment, current ratio, and share price are still useful, but are no longer the "only measure of performance being used" (p. 1). This may be due, in part, to companies realizing that measures of this type can reflect value of the organization. Although this trend may continue, it remains evident that organizational leaders, e.g., managers and trainers, will steer toward training that is practical and applicable, specific to organizational needs, and provides value.

One lesson learned from items generated by practitioners is that a number of training courses are being provided under the umbrella term "communication training." As Table 13 indicates, respondents volunteered communication items that supposedly were not listed. Interestingly, respondents volunteered a few items that were either explicitly on the questionnaire or implicitly determined as overlap items. For example, "soft skills" training and creativity were volunteered. Clearly, creativity is one of the 15 survey items. But, based on responses volunteered, some respondents do not consider soft skills training as an item listed. It is not a listed item, but respondents echoed a similar belief that soft skills and communication training items tend to be synonymous in training practiced. Further, face-to-face communication arguably could be considered an interpersonal communication skill. Feedback also appears as an exclusive item from verbal and nonverbal communication.

Second, based on responses volunteered, additional items might be added to the list for it to be more comprehensive. It could be argued that not all items volunteered warrant positions as exclusive communication items. For example, project management objective setting, in my opinion, is not a communication topic studied in university communication curricula. But, I do believe that meeting facilitation can be viewed as a more specific skill than group communication skills. However, it might not be as easy to concede that multi-cultural training differs from diversity training. Of course, it depends on the specific type of training program and curriculum included. Clearly, since "by 2006, Hispanic, Asian, and African Americans will together comprise nearly 30 percent of the workforce" combined with the greater numbers of women and older workers; diversity training is a welcomed addition to any training program. In sum, alterations to improve the instrument in terms of practitioners' perceptions might be made. But, items must be evaluated in terms of exclusivity before inclusion is considered.

Third, quality programs, customer service, specific leadership programs, negotiation skills, conflict resolution, feedback, multi-cultural and project objective setting represent items most frequently mentioned. Facilitating meetings and sexual harassment also receive notable responses. Many of these areas concur with future forces and trends noted in this study. Entering the 21st century presents workplace challenges that require upgrading of these skills. It was also interesting that the term "etiquette" was suggested as a communication training item and also "business etiquette." Respondents explained that this entails "when and how to say the right thing" (written survey response, 2000).

Fourth, business technical writing and e-mail also seem to be areas targeted for improvement by the respondents. Some respondents indicated that programs have been designed to not only help people with basic writing skills and/or business writing skills; but particularly to teach individuals at all levels in organizations to compose and respond to e-mail correspondence and messaging more effectively.

Writing has become increasingly important with the advent of e-mail technology. Locker (2000) explains that writing historically has been an important part of conducting business, but especially today "written channels are better than oral ones for conveying complex information . . . less expensive, more convenient for the respondent, and provide a written record to help in avoiding lawsuits" (p. 6). The author states that "only 12% of business phone calls find the intended receiver in the office on the first try" (Locker, 2000, p. 6). Additionally, "written documents become even more important in international business" (Locker, 2000, p. 6).

Locker (2000) explains that one purpose of writing is to persuade (p. 6). Persuasion, as a communication item, did not fair well in comparison to other skill items on the questionnaire. An overwhelming number of respondents either wrote in or explained over the phone that the term "persuasion" conjures up negative connotations for them. Some suggested using motivation as a replacement term. Others recommended substituting "influence" for persuasion. Communication literature offers compliance-gaining as an alternative. For some respondents, persuasion implies manipulation or trickery.

Others would disagree. For instance, Abernathy, Allerton, Barron, Gallagan, and Salopek (1999) state that despite the "burgeoning use of technology in business, interpersonal skills remain vitally important to success in the workplace" (p. 43). Further, the authors report that a recent OfficeTeam survey of 1,400 chief information officers shows that "77% of respondents think increased use of technology will require workers to communicate more effectively and articulately" (p. 43). Persuasion, as a skill, is considered to be an integral part of that effectiveness package.

Skills identified by these executives as critical to helping staff members succeed in their jobs included problem-solving, ethics, open-mindedness, persuasiveness, leadership, and educational interests (Abernathy, et al., 1999, p. 43). It is interesting that persuasiveness is not clarified here and that ethics was not an item generated by respondents in this study. Another point made by Abernathy, et al. (1999) is that the skills selected by the executives "may be even more difficult to develop than technical expertise because of their intangibility" (p. 43).

Findings from survey responses point to several issues in communication training. First, the results suggest that human resource practitioners, particularly managers and trainers, are predominantly female Caucasians around 40 years of age. This is consistent with the literature which reports that the numbers of females in the workforce are increasing and that human resource positions report high numbers of women in practice.

Demographic information provided by survey respondents indicated that differences occurred in comparison testing between communication items and gender; but not for age or race. The large number of white, females in the study could have been a

contributing factor. However, taking that into consideration, the results show that differences exist in types of communication training provided and perceptions of importance on types of training with regard to gender. Significant differences were not detected for leadership and listening. Therefore, null Hypotheses 1 and 2, stating that no differences exist, are accepted with respect to leadership and listening. In contrast, significant differences were detected for the items verbal and nonverbal communication with respect to gender, therefore, null Hypotheses 2 and 3 are rejected.

Finally, collapsing the 15 communication items into two categories (interpersonal and group) consistent with the frameworks used in this study, shows that a significant difference exists between these two groupings. Further, the results indicate that significant differences also exist between these two categories with respect to gender. As reported in the "Results" section of this study, the collapsed categories (interpersonal and group) were based on groupings identified by Rubin, R. B., Rubin, A. M., and Piele, L. J. (1996, p. 6) and communication levels identified by Frey, Botan, and Kreps (1991, p. 33). Communication transactions involving three or more persons constitute the group category and those focusing on intrapersonal and interpersonal contexts (dyads) comprised the interpersonal category or grouping.

The implications with respect to gender and these two groupings is that, based on these findings, female respondents in this study report higher levels of perceived importance for "group" skills over "interpersonal" skills. Interestingly, the group skills category did not contain communication items that females reported to provide more than males in Table 14 (verbal and nonverbal communication). These communication training

items were the only two of the four tested that showed significant differences on gender. Research, such as that conducted by Robbins (1998), supports the notion that women, in general, are more concerned with using communication to make "connections" than their male counterparts and focus more on others in group activities" (p. 330). This is not to say, however, that generalizations can be made beyond the boundaries and context of this study. Also, it is feasible that women might rate the collapsed category (interpersonal) higher than the category (group) if the individual communication items were varied.

The findings of this study suggest that communication training, as an integral part of the organizational system, comprises more than 50% of the training provided by respondents' organizations. Furthermore, many types of training occur that are included in the communication questionnaire and most are considered to be "very important." This concurs with literature supporting that same premise as central to this study.

Further, all communication items are not created equally. Of the 15 communication questionnaire items, significant differences exist and a hierarchical order by perceptions of importance is offered. In addition, qualitative data volunteered by respondents is informative in identifying communication training items provided by practitioners that did not appear on the survey listing. This information should be useful in helping human resource managers and trainers assess and design communication-specific training programs that are pragmatic in nature. There appears to be much interest in the training community in this area because 98% of the respondents in this study requested an abstract of the results.

Limitations of the Study

It is customary and appropriate in research studies to identify limitations or problems with a study (Frey, Botan, & Kreps, 2000, p. 389). Limitations specific to this study are problems that threaten validity and reliability. First, pilot studies were not conducted. Second, focus groups might be of some utility in survey development. For purposes of this study, several individuals involved in academe, training, and consulting were consulted prior to designing the questionnaire. These individuals were accessible to the researcher and would be considered a convenience sample. However, a broader range of individuals with greater geographical representation could improve internal and external validity issues.

Third, random sampling techniques from populations of trainers and human resource managers or others could improve the quality of the study (if cost is not a prohibitive factor). (Fortunately, e-mail surveys helped reduce the costs involved in this study). This study targeted three different populations of human resource practitioners and did not employ probability sampling techniques. Since the intent was to target as many respondents as possible and extract a large number of practitioner responses, either random sampling or purposive sampling only would have served the purpose of limiting the target audiences. The goal here was to increase the chances of obtaining high response rates. However, generalizability is thus extremely limited.

Fourth, the research questions fit the design of the study well. In general, exploratory and descriptive studies do not aim to predict. However, future studies might have the capacity to pose directional hypotheses and conduct one-tailed tests.

Fifth, the anonymity given to respondents creates a nonthreatening environment that allows for honest and open responses. The disadvantage of using an anonymous, untracked survey is that it prohibits feedback in terms of follow-up.

Sixth, the strategy of collapsing the 15 communication items into two distinct categories for comparison, although based on levels purported by Rubin, R. B., Rubin, A. M., and Piele, L. J. (1996, p. 6) and Frey, Botan, and Kreps (1991, p. 33) and with use of coders, is a subjective judgment. Arguments could be made for placing items into different categories or groupings and varying item selection per grouping. This is a limitation to the study that reflects possible researcher bias.

Finally, the questionnaire itself needs to be more clear regarding Question 2. The "other" provision is evidently not needed since the open-ended opportunity is presented for Question 1. Evidently, respondents were uncertain about rating items they volunteered since not a single respondent rated any item volunteered in importance.

Implications for Further Research

This study is informative to communication training and development in several ways. It should be viewed as a springboard for future work and not the "be all, end all" by any means. Significant differences at the $p<.05$ level were detected among the 15 communication training items, between items measured on the importance criterion and between females and males for the items verbal and nonverbal communication. Additionally, when the 15 items were collapsed into two groups, interpersonal and group skills, significant differences were detected between those groupings, as well as showing that females rated group skills more highly in importance.

Overall, the trends and future forces fit well with the importance ratings of communication training items, i.e., that it will become "increasingly difficult to hold on to good people . . . in the midst of technological, socioeconomic, and demographic changes" (Coats, J. F., 1990, p. 1). Items rating extremely high in importance reflect growing concerns of organizations and management to focus on leadership and listening, as well as groups, e.g., teamwork.

Generally, the 15 items provide a base to build from. Significant differences among items indicate that knowing which communication training to offer is valuable. Further, it is clear that communication training, in general, is perceived as important to organizational health.

The results point to a few areas that are worthy of future attention. First, demographic information from respondents and communication training items should be explored further for effects. Similarities and differences in the areas of gender, race, and age might produce important results. A current training trend identified by Gordon (1995) in the area of diversity is one that focuses on the "uniqueness of the individual instead of being oriented toward identity groups" (p. 28). The author further states that the "key is to simply bring members of different groups into a work setting, accomplishing a common task" (p. 28). Apparently this is a newer strategy as opposed to one the centers on discussions by employees about their differences. In any event, this is identified as an important area for communication training and development and definitely warrants follow-up studies.

Second, the soft skills phenomena is prevalent in the literature. Virtually every respondent in this study eluded to the fact that increased technology actually burgeons the need for more extensive soft skills or communication training, especially for high-tech and manufacturing companies. A case in point appears in a report by Training magazine staff wherein the Society of Manufacturing Engineers identified competency gaps in newly hired engineers (ranging from automakers to aerospace firms, and machine toolmakers). The results of their investigation revealed that "most new engineers have enough technical and computer skills to hit the ground running, but they fall short in personal skills such as teamwork, communication, and understanding" (Training staff writers, 1998, p. 17).

Lussier, R. (1999) reports on the importance of human relations skills for career success and failure. The author reports that "85 percent of the factors contributing to job success are personal qualities while technical knowledge accounts for only 15 percent according to the Carnegie Foundation" (Lussier, 1999, p. 4). The Harvard Bureau of Vocational Guidance adds that of people fired from their jobs, 66 percent were fired because they failed to get along with people and only 34 percent lost jobs due to lack of technical knowledge" (p. 4).

Moreover, as one telephone survey respondent commented, "What we really need in Silicon Valley and everywhere else is a common communication language within and without--not just hard skills vs. soft skills types of training" (telephone interview, August, 2000). This response echoed throughout the process of questioning practitioners. One of the purposes of this study included making strides to help bridge this gap and move one step closer to a common communication training language.

A third area arising from results of this study is that of further melding the business community with communication training practices and education. Practitioners volunteered comments indicating that trainers do not get hired unless their programs consist of relevant, practical, and applicable content. Training programs also need to be specific to the individual needs of each unique organizational system. And, clearly, communication training is considered to be an important part of those systems.

In addition, trainers will need to equip themselves with the tools required to fill their roles in an ever-changing workplace environment. Hequet (1995) explains that new responsibilities must be assumed by trainers and training managers beyond the traditional tasks of "assessing training needs, designing training, delivering it and then measuring its impact" (p. 23). The author adds that these new responsibilities include helping managers solve performance problems, participating in the development of the organization's strategic direction, facilitating process improvement, knowing information technology and creating interactive multimedia training programs (p. 23). In order to effectively carry out these responsibilities, trainers and managers need to master such skills as "listening, negotiating, coaching, testing and measurement, strategic planning, problem-solving, and facilitating organizational change" (Hequet, p. 23). This sounds like a fairly tall order; but one must also keep in mind that, in general, "the training environment has changed from teacher-centered to learner-centered" (Shin-Far, 1996, p. 1). It can be inferred that both trainers and trainees are ultimately responsible for the efficiency of training.

Voicing a similar perspective, respondents to this survey (human resource managers and trainers) explained that there is a critical need for communication training

designers. Evidently, in their opinions, there are not many qualified individuals who specialize in developing communication-specific training programs. There could be several reasons for this including unfamiliarity with communication content and/or use of standardized communication programs or packages. Generally, respondents reported that many communication training programs miss the mark in terms of linking communication know-how to practice. It is my belief that much can be accomplished in this area. But, it will take continued effort to effectively blend the art and science of communication know-how with business needs at the applied level.

A question was posed by the title of this study, "Communication Skills Training: What is the State of the Art?" Communication training appears to be in a state of flux--meaning constant change. This is not surprising because training is typically a responsive act in accord with socioeconomic events. Interestingly, snapshot pictures of training practices often reflect innovations of the times, as well as reflecting the status quo.

In this vein, this study does shed some light on current practices in communication training and development. First, communication skills training is perceived to be important to organizational health. Second, certain communication training is provided to a greater extent than others. Third, certain communication training items are perceived to be more important than others (hierarchical order).

The problem stated at the onset of this investigation warrants further study. In general, the communication training literature is void of specificity in terms, definitions, types of training offered, and particularly, evidence of communication training considered

to be important. As Frey et al. (2000) convey: "communication is an umbrella term that covers numerous, apparently disparate, activities" (p. 27). Respondents in this study indicated that communication training is many times considered to be an umbrella term for numerous types of training programs. And, that certain items on the communication questionnaire overlap or fall under broader categories or training areas.

This study demonstrates that it is feasible to systematically analyze and examine specific communication skills which fall under the broad umbrella term, "communication training." The identification of the 15 communication items and ascertaining their perceived importance, provides an initial step to better classification. Second, in addition to the 15 items listed, respondents volunteered other items considered to be communication training that have been offered in their training programs. Third, volunteered responses offered practitioner's views and insights about the state of training practice. Finally, the results of this study show that communication training is perceived to be important by human resource practitioners to the general health of organizational systems.

In sum, Frey et al. (2000) note that many approaches to communication involve making things common (p. 27). The authors add that *communication* is derived from the Latin word, *communis*, meaning to make common (Frey et al., 2000, p. 27). Interestingly, many respondents to this study used the term "common communication language." With continued efforts, it should be possible to more closely determine what

exactly comprises a common language for communication training. This study offers a basic framework and extensive research to help with those efforts. Others are encouraged to use the information, recommendations, and results of this study to improve their understanding so they can contribute their knowledge to this fascinating field.

Appendix A

Dear Human Resource Practitioner:

Wouldn't it be great to know what is really going on with communication training and development?

There is much agreement that **effective communication skills are essential** to sound organizational health. However, there is a scant amount of viable research and/or information available concerning communication training and development. In addition, there is a lack of congruence in defining the term "communication skills." What exactly is communication skills training? This study is being conducted to address these issues. The purpose of the survey is to tap into the perceptions of human resource practitioners and retrieve a snapshot of communication skills training and development.

As a doctoral candidate, I am conducting this study under the auspices of the University of Oklahoma to satisfy dissertation requirements. I would greatly appreciate it if you could take a few minutes to help me with my dissertation by answering a few questions.

Please be advised that completion of this survey is voluntary and refusal to participate will involve no penalty. Also, by completing and returning the enclosed survey, you are agreeing to participate in the study. A self-addressed, postage prepaid envelope has been included for your convenience in returning the survey.

As a benefit of participating in the survey, I would be more than happy to provide you with an abstract of the results. It is my belief that information provided by this study could be useful to anyone involved in the human resource arena. Since your responses will remain anonymous and not be tracked in any manner, please call me if you would like an abstract of the results at (405) 324-2873.

Your time is appreciated. **Thank you!** If you have any questions about the study, please call me at (405) 324-2873. Additionally, if you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, please contact the Office of Research Administration at (405) 325-4757.

Sincerely,

Nina Barbee
Research Associate

Appendix B

Communication Questionnaire

1. **What types of communication training have you provided in the past two years?**

___ Presentation skills	___Teamwork	___Leadership
___Listening	___Interpersonal	___Diversity
___Verbal communication	___Writing	___Nonverbal comm.
___Creativity	___Performance Appraisal	___Mentoring/ Coaching
___Group communication	___Problem-solving	___Persuasion

OTHER: _____

2. **Please rate the following items in terms of your perception of importance on a continuum from 1-5 with 1 being "Not at all Important" and 5 being "Extremely Important." "I will read each item and then you can respond with a rating from 1 to 5."**

___ Presentation skills	___Teamwork	___Leadership
___Listening	___Interpersonal	___Diversity
___Verbal communication	___Writing	___Nonverbal comm.
___Creativity	___Performance Appraisal	___Mentoring/ Coaching
___Group communication	___Problem-solving	___Persuasion

OTHER: _____

3. **What percentage of the total amount of training you provide would you consider to be communication training? _____%**

Demographic Information: ___Male ___Female

___Age

Educational level: ___High School ___Some College

___College degree ___Graduate degree

Ethnic background:

___ Asian, Asian American

___ Black, African American

___ Latino, Hispanic, Mexican American

___ Native American, American Indian

___ White, Caucasian

___ Other

"Thank you for your time and for being a part of this study."

Appendix C

TELEPHONE SCRIPT

"Hello. My name is Nina Barbee. I am a doctoral candidate conducting a study under the auspices of the University of Oklahoma about communication training and development. I would greatly appreciate it if you could take a few minutes to help me with my dissertation by answering a few questions."

"I need to inform you that participation in this survey is voluntary and refusal to participate will involve no penalty. Also, by responding to the questions asked, you are agreeing to participate in the study. Responses will be confidential and there is no risk for participants in the survey."

"If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant or the project, please contact me (Nina Barbee) at (405) 324-2873 or the Office of Research Administration at (405) 325-4757."

"As a benefit of participation, I would be more than happy to provide you with an abstract of the results. If you are interested in obtaining an abstract, please indicate so by giving your address after we complete the survey together."

"I'm going to ask you about the types of communication training you have provided in the past two years. After I read each item, please respond with "yes" or "no" to indicate if you have provided that type of training. Do you have any questions?"

Appendix D

List of Companies Voted "100 Best to Work For"
(Branch, 1999, Fortune)

1. Acipco
2. Acxion
3. AFLAC
4. Alagasco
5. Alcon Laboratories
6. Allied Signal/Honeywell
7. Amgen
8. Applied Materials
9. Arrow Electronics
10. Autodesk
11. Baldor Electric
12. Baptist Helath Systems
13. Bean (L. L.)
14. BE&K
15. BMC Software
16. Bureau of National Affairs
17. Capital One
18. CDW
19. Cerner
20. Cisco Systems
21. Computer Associates
22. CompuWare
23. Continental Airlines
24. Corning
25. Deloitte & Touche
26. Edwards (A. G.)
27. Edwards (J. D.)
28. Enron
29. Enterprise Rent-A-Car
30. Erie Insurance
31. Ernst & Young
32. FedEx
33. Fenwick & West
34. Finova Group
35. First Tennessee Bank
36. Four Seasons Hotels
37. Genentech
38. Goldman Sachs
39. Gore (W. L.) & Associates
40. Grainger (W. W.)
41. Granite Rock
42. Great Plains Software
43. Guidant
44. Harley-Davidson
45. Hewlett-Packard
46. Honda of America Mfg.
47. Ingram Micro
48. Intel
49. Interface
50. Janus

51. JM Family Enterprises
52. Johnson (S. C.)
53. Johnson & Johnson
54. Jones (Edward)
55. K2
56. Kingston Technology
57. Kinko's
58. Land's End
59. LensCrafters
60. Lucas Digital
61. Lucent Technologies
62. Marriott International
63. MBNA
64. Medtronic
65. Merck
66. Merill Lynch
67. Miller (Herman)
68. Microsoft
69. Nordstrom
70. Odetics
71. Ohio National Financial Services
72. Patagonia
73. People Soft
74. Plante & Moran
75. Publix Super Markets
76. Quad/Graphics
77. Qualcomm
78. Quantum
79. REI
80. Russell (Frank)
81. SAS Institute
82. Scitor
83. Smucker (U. M.)
84. Southwest Airlines
85. Starbucks
86. Sun Microsystems
87. Synovus Financial
88. TDIndustries
89. 3Com
90. 3M
91. Timberland
92. Union Pacific Resources Group
93. UNUM
94. USAA
95. Valassis Communications
96. Wal-Mart
97. Wegmans
98. Whole Foods Market
99. Worthington Industries
100. Valassis Communications

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